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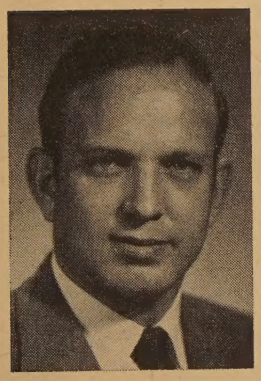
A Journal of Contemporary Preaching



Everett Tilson:

Segregation and the Ten Commandments

F. W. Schroeder • Tonic for the Timid

William M. Elliott, Jr. • On Turning Back

Robert L. Eddy • Pray for a Miracle

Diogenes Allen • Lord of All Mankind

C. Willard Fetter • Grounds for Belief

DANIEL T. NILES

EVANGELISM IN A WORLD OF RAPID CHANGE

VOL. XXXI, No. 8 AUGUST 1960

The Pulpit

Founded 1929 by Charles Clayton Morrison as a journal of contemporary preaching.

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35 cents single issue.
$4 a year in U.S.A. and Canada.
$4.50 foreign.

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Published monthly by the Christian Century Foundation, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago 5, Ill. HArrison 7-5380.

CONTENTS: AUGUST 1960

SERMONS

Segregation and the Ten Commandments .... *Everett Tilson* 4
Tonic for the Timid ..... *F. W. Schroeder* 10
On Turning Back ..... *William M. Elliott, Jr.* 13
Pray for a Miracle ..... *Robert L. Eddy* 16
The Lord of All Mankind ..... *Diogenes Allen* 19
Grounds for Belief in God ..... *C. Willard Fetter* 21

ARTICLES

Evangelism in a World of Rapid Change ... *Daniel T. Niles* 7
Reading from the Pulpit ..... *Thomas H. Marsh* 24
Ministering to Persons ..... *Roy A. Burkhart* 26

FEATURES

Pulpit Post 2
Editorial 3
Sermons in the News 12
The Mourners Bench 15
Thoughts on Preaching . 18
Pulpit Calendar 25
Book Reviews 27
The Trading Post 31

PULPIT POST

On the One Hand

SIR: You indicate that the sermon "Strangeness of Faith" by Will Herberg (June) is the kind you are looking for. This is indeed a fine sermon and full of provocative thought. I imagine it would fall upon responsive ears at a seminary convocation. However, I wonder if hearers in the average church would not be perusing outer space after the first few paragraphs. Its message, that passionate atheists are more religious than average churchgoers, would, I assure you, be a dud in Podunk Hollow.

In the first place, passionate atheists in Middletown are about as rare as volunteer astronauts. On the other hand, average churchgoers are very common and numbered among them are almost always *some* passionate believers. For this reason in the typical church this sermon would be considered unfair and deeply resented.

Will Herberg is an excellent writer and this is the kind of sermon we preachers need to read, but please give us some samples of sermons that will "go over" in Grover's Corners, Davis Junction and Apple River.

J. ELLIOTT CORBETT
The Methodist Church
Oregon, Ill.

On the Other Hand

SIR: My parish is a rural one, with a congregation under one hundred. It contains only two college graduates, and the majority of its adults were educated in a one-room schoolhouse. Nonetheless, it has been my pleasure to find that there is no need to reduce the intellectual level of the sermons for these people. If the basic issues are presented to them in a clear form and in a straightforward manner, they have the capacity to grasp them as well as a more sophisticated congregation.

I mention these matters to you because of the complaints from pastors I have noted in correspondence to The Pulpit. As you know, many pastors say that the sort of thing you publish could not be preached to an average congregation and hence is not representative of the contemporary pulpit. I believe from my experience in this one parish, that one need not water down his sermon to the "level" of his people as long as he himself has a sufficient enough grasp of the subject on which he is preaching to present it with clarity. Preach on what is important, be clear, and the congregation can follow. It can even be enthusiastic!

DIOGENES ALLEN
Windham Presbyterian Church
Windham, N. H.

Not for Burning

SIR: It is a pity that so excellent a sermon as Dr. Ice's "In Whose Image?" in the June issue of The Pulpit should be marred by reference to the old canard of witch burning in New England. Thus he speaks in

(Continued on page 31)

The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

VOLUME XXXI AUGUST 1960 No. 8

Reckonings

FOR four months now this column has been commenting on the purpose and plan of this journal and on the general subject of homiletics. August — vacation month for most of you — is a good time for an interlude in which we consider informally some of the developments which are taking place in this magazine. Perhaps you have noticed that in addition to the usual features The Pulpit now includes two new columns: "Thoughts on Preaching" and "The Trading Post." Both of these columns invite your participation, particularly the latter. I am hoping that through "The Trading Post" our readers will exchange sermon thoughts, brief outlines, choice quotations and other assorted items which go into the making of a sermon. I am supplying the capital for this column but that capital is not inexhaustible. You are invited to take whatever is usable but you are also urged to make payment in kind. Let me have your contributions and I will see that you get proper credit. No white elephants, please. We know the story about the three men building a cathedral; the traveler who was put off at the wrong station; and the boy who, carrying a younger child on his back, said, "He's not heavy; he's my brother." But we do accept antiques if they are genuine *and* obscure.

Another item which I thought might be of interest to you is "Sermons in the News." This is proving to be the most difficult part of the journal to prepare each month. How seldom do sermons make the news! To be sure, they are advertised and sometimes reviewed on the church page, but in the main the church page is no more relevant to the actual news of the day than is the Sunday supplement. Rarely does a sermon in our time make the front page of a significant newspaper; seldom does mention of a sermon in the secular press escape the rather narrow bounds of the page or half-page which is given to church news. We can draw varied conclusions from this fact, but whatever we do with it the fact remains. I have no doubt that it is a commentary on something; perhaps you know what.

Beginning this month we shall have another regular feature. It has been several times suggested to me that we should have a column similar to the one written for *The Christian Century* by Simeon Stylites. (I wonder who he is.) The column has to be written, of course, by a preacher for preachers. It needs to be fresh, witty, practical and relevant to the pastoral and preaching ministry. Who can produce that kind of material month after month? I believe we now have the answer to that question and can satisfy this need. The column will be called "The Mourners Bench." (The author says, "No apostrophe, please.") It will be written for us by G. Hobab Kish. (Most of you will not need more than three guesses to put a real personality behind that pseudonym.) You will probably be reading about Kish's Law, Kish's First Principle, Kish's Choice. Read three or four of these offerings and then let me know what you think about them.

Letters to the editor and to "Pulpit Post" increase and this pleases us. Say what you want to but don't ignore us. Two of the letters used in this issue illustrate how the readers can help achieve the purpose of this journal. The one by J. Elliott Corbett argues that the sermon by Will Herberg in the June issue, although excellent for ministers, would "be a dud in Podunk Hollow." He asks for "samples of sermons that will 'go over' in Grover's Corners, Davis Junction, and Apple River." (No offense to the residents of these villages is implied; we have friends in all four.) Diogenes Allen, on the other hand, argues that "there is no need to reduce the intellectual level of the sermons for these people." He has the courage of his convictions and submits a sermon which he preached in the small, rural church where he serves. Let me call your attention also, to the sermon by Robert L. Eddy, which was preached in a village setting. This sermon by Dr. Eddy supports the contention that in this day rural and village congregations are sometimes more sophisticated than we suppose. Certainly it can be said that in our preaching we should estimate the intellectual condition of the congregation without underestimating its intellectual capacity. Incidentally, the sermon by Will Herberg was originally preached, not to ministers, but to the Chicago Sunday Evening Club. I doubt that it was too erudite for its setting; if so, it still had the marks of a good sermon: biblical, passionate, eloquent, applicable.

KYLE HASELDEN

Segregation and the Ten Commandments

By Everett Tilson

ALMOST universally the churches officially condemn segregation. They do so, not on constitutional grounds, but because of the demands of their Lord. Our Christian churches do not oppose segregation because it is illegal; they oppose segregation because it is immoral. They do not oppose it because it is unconstitutional; they oppose it because it is unchristian. They do not oppose it because it breaches the ten amendments; they oppose it because it breaches the ten commandments.

Segregation breaches the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me." It substitutes race for God as the organizing center of life. It measures the worth and growth of human existence by an altogether human yardstick. And this, as we all know, is worse than immoral; it is idolatrous. Christian segregationists think they have an answer to this charge. In unqualified commitment to their race, they assure us, they have escaped that bondage to self which Christian faith sees as the root evil of human existence. But this assurance can hardly survive close scrutiny. Quite the contrary, segregation furnishes us with a center for the organization of our pride and ambition. No matter how physically weak, mentally dull or morally obtuse, so long as men of distinction wear a white skin, they can take pride in their common heritage with Al Capone and John Dillinger, not to mention John Kasper and Senator Eastland.

Segregationists do not betray their self-centeredness in their hymn of praise to the white man; they do it by their private refrain: "Just think of it! I am a member of the Master Race!" They do not take pride in their race because it is white; they take pride in the white race because it is theirs. They do not idolize white skin because it is a mark of distinction; they make white skin a mark of distinction because possession is nine-tenths of idolatry. They idolize the white race because they belong to the white race. Thanks to their possession of the skin of the superior man's color, they can idolize themselves. Worse yet, thanks to the presence among them of other men of this same color, vocal altruism becomes a shield for covert egocentrism. Segregation does worse than put the god of race before the God of the universe. It puts the maker of me and mine before the Maker of heaven and earth.

EVERETT TILSON *became professor of Old Testament this summer at the new Methodist Theological School in Ohio, leaving Vanderbilt University Divinity School where he had been associate professor of biblical theology. A graduate of King College and Vanderbilt, where he took both his B.D. and Ph.D. degrees, Dr. Tilson served a Presbyterian church in Madison, Tennessee, and a Methodist church in Nashville before beginning his teaching career.*

In this sermon the full force of the ancient commandments is brought to bear upon the modern evils of segregation.

America's Graven Image

Segregation breaches the second commandment: "You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything . . . in heaven above, . . . the earth below, or . . . in the water under the earth." It turns a paleface into a graven image, then bows down and worships "the likeness" of what is "in the earth below." If here I were to substitute the platform of the Marxists or the ritual of the Canaanites for the platform or the ritual of the Eastlands, the breach of the second commandment would become quite clear. We Americans have remarkable skill in uncovering and shattering the graven images of the Russians and the Canaanites. Unfortunately, we do not fare so well in the struggle against the graven image of Jefferson Davis. But the graven image is there, and it is exceedingly dangerous. What must be set down as one of the most ironic facts of our time is the readiness of the most blatant anti-Marxists among us to let segregation take the same place in our life that communism occupies in the Kremlin.

Segregation breaches the third commandment: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." It asks God to bless us in our refusal to identify our neighbor by the love of God. Bishop Nygren reminds us: "When it is said that God loves man, this is not a judgment on what man is like, but what God is like." By the same token, when the New Testament confronts us with the demand to love neighbor as self, it tells us nothing at all about our neighbor. Nothing about the size of his fortune, nothing about the

state of his soul, nothing about the color of his skin. It tells us only that our neighbor, whoever, wherever and whatever he is, is beloved of God. And God loves our neighbor, not because he is lovable, but because God is loving. If God's love for neighbor be blind love, value blind, creed blind, color blind, and our love be conscious love, value conscious, creed conscious and color conscious, we should hardly be surprised at Jesus' stinging rebuke of our unctious piety: "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Segregation breaches the fourth commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." It sunders those whom God would join together. Instead of bringing Christians together because of a common faith, it keeps them apart despite a common faith. A local minister, in a recent sermon on "The Almighty Race Question," illustrates the deep tragedy of the relation between segregation and the fourth commandment. The church bulletin which carries this sermon contains the following word of welcome: "Ours is a friendly church — visitors are always welcome." But the sermon makes it quite clear that this applies only to certain visitors. There the minister says: "It is . . . the opinion of the official board that . . . in this time of tension any member of our church desiring to bring . . . Negroes must previously have cleared the matter with the Pastor-in-charge, securing a written note from him to the effect that it is permissible." And some people are shocked by the requirement of a pass book in South Africa.

Segregation breaches the fifth commandment: "Honor your father and your mother." It defines kinship in terms of blood rather than faith. That is not the way Jesus defined it. One day, as Jesus was speaking, "a crowd said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers are outside, asking for you.' And he replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking around on those who sat beside him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother.' "

More Subtle Ways

Segregation breaches the sixth commandment: "You shall not kill." It kills the noblest impulses in man. As Jesus so clearly saw, you can kill men without taking up the sword against them. The vitriolic tongues or pens of angry little men can be just as murderous as the sword or bomb in the hands of a maniac. Our Lord said: "You have heard . . . it . . . said . . ., 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says 'you fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire."

If Mr. and Mrs. Looby had been killed in the explosion that rocked Nashville recently, who would have been responsible for their murder? A lot of people would have been responsible for their murder. The jails of Nashville could not begin to accommodate all the people who helped to set the stage for that crime. A whole host of Nashvillians aided and abetted the men who threw that bomb. All of us who have in any way insulted Negroes, we, as well as the droppers of the bomb, would have been guilty of this crime.

Sharing the Guilt

Here I do not refer alone to the merchants who turned "thumbs down" on the request of the Negroes for service at downtown lunch counters, thus forcing people to have to wage demonstrations for rights you and I take for granted. I do not refer alone to the people who, in one breath hail as patriots the American revolutionaries who took up arms in protest against "taxation without representation," then in the next condemn Negroes as anarchists for sitting down in protest against "equal prices without equal privileges." I do not refer alone to the people who, though many of them know better, trace this whole movement to a few outside "agitators." I do not refer alone to the operators of local television stations who, in the midst of a controversial issue, fail to ask any Negro leader to interpret for Nashville the other side of this controversy. I do not refer alone to the churchman who, after two months of eloquent silence in Nashville, calls the church in Denver to speak with "a clear voice" on race relations, but even at that safe distance, fails to say what it is the church ought to say with "a clear voice." I do not refer alone to the tea-and-cocktail experts on human relations who, between their semi-annual teas with Negro friends, drink cocktails once a week with Christian segregationists. I do not refer alone to the whites who believe cultured Negroes ought to play the role of guinea pigs, that we might be convinced one by one of their readiness for admission into high civilization, as if the burden of proof rested on the shoulders of the Negro to prove to you and me that he is our equal. I do not refer alone to the moderates who, until the Negroes laid siege to the wall of segregation, said it must fall; then after reading a few objective editorials on the subject, decided that Nashville is not the place, now is not the time and these are not the Negroes. I do not refer alone to the people who, when northern industrialists show up at downtown restaurants, treat them as distinguished guests, yet insult Americans from Mississippi or South Carolina because of a difference in the pigmentation of skin.

I refer to those of us who insult the Negro by

failing to translate his quest into human terms. I refer to all of us who, when we see a Negro man directing his thirsty child away from a water fountain, his hungry wife away from a lunch counter or his frail mother away from a comfortable seat, insult him by failing to exclaim, "But for the accident of birth there I go." I refer to all of us who, when we see a Negro mother leave her children alone while she goes to another part of the city to keep those of a white socialite, insult her by failing to say, "But for the accident of birth there goes my sister."

There are endless ways of smothering the life of the oppressed. One of the oldest and most common is simply to close our minds and hearts to the fact of their existence.

The relation of segregation to the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery," cannot be stated quite so simply. But one fact lies beyond dispute: Segregation has not prevented the violation of the commandment against adultery on an interracial basis. Here we do not even have to redefine adultery, as Jesus did, in terms of the lustful look. Under segregation, as under integration, men and women of both races have broken the seventh commandment. To paraphrase Lincoln: the fact that some white men will not have the black woman as a wife does not keep them from using her as a mistress.

A Thief that Robs Us All

Segregation breaches the eighth commandment: "You shall not steal." It robs the white man and it robs the Negro. It robs the white man of a chance to discover that it is not the race but the segregation of the Negro that keeps him, in all too many of his places, in slums and poverty. It robs him of a chance to discover that, beneath the skin, Negroes and whites share a common humanity: They rejoice alike at birth, they weep alike at death, they suffer alike in pain, they hope alike in marriage, and they dream alike as parents. But what segregation steals from the Negro, as pointed out in the report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights, is much more basic and elementary. It robs him of equal access to public facilities. It robs him of equal access to educational opportunities. It robs him of equal access to decent housing in good neighborhoods. It robs him of equal access to a typical workweek and favorable working conditions. It robs him of equal access to hospital facilities. It robs him of the respect and dignity due him as a human being.

Segregation breaches the ninth commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Segregation bears false witness against the white man, and it bears false witness against the Negro. Segregation bears false witness against the white man by ascribing his advantages to extraneous considerations. If he has a stratospheric intelligence quotient, it is traced not to his genius but to his race. If he enjoys superior economic advantages, it is traced not to his industry but to his race. If he is especially good, it is traced not to the purity of his heart but to the whiteness of his skin. If such logic held, a Negro of virtue, wealth or intelligence would be an impossibility.

Segregation prompts men to bear false witness against the Negro. If he lives in a slum, the Negro is charged not with poverty but laziness. If he works in a kitchen, the reason is not discrimination but limitation. If he fails as an engineer, the reason is not a lack of education but a shortage of intelligence. If he goes to jail, the reason is not environment but heredity. If this logic held, there would be no Negroes in engineering, kitchens or slums. All Negroes would be behind bars.

Segregation has betrayed us into bearing false witness about both races. It has betrayed us into granting the white man undeserved advantages. It has betrayed us into denying the Negro basic rights. In short, thanks in part at least to segregation, we have broken the ninth commandment against members of both races.

Segregation breaches the tenth commandment: "You shall not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor's." It prompts the white man to covet what belongs to the Negro. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that all men have a right to protection against any "inhuman or degrading treatment," against "any discrimination," against any denial of "equal access to public service," against any refusal of "equal pay for equal work," against "any restriction of full participation in the cultural and scientific advancements and benefits of society." If true, we cannot deny the Negro, or any other person, his enjoyment of these rights without coveting what belongs to our neighbor. Therefore, insofar as segregation does involve men in the denial of these rights, by the same token it involves them in the breach of the tenth commandment.

The future of desegregation depends on our point of departure in times of crisis. How we answer the questions, "When do we start?" and "How fast do we travel?" will hinge largely on the authority from whom we take our orders. If we take our cues from our neighbors' prejudices we shall move slowly and in all probability, in the wrong direction at the wrong time for the wrong reason. But on the other hand, if we take our cues from God's commandments, who among us would dare answer: "Be patient, Lord, and I'll do what you say, but not here and not yet." It may be later than we think. This may be the hour for the tribe of Elijah to rise up and say to this generation: "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If Jesus Christ is Lord, follow him; but if Jim Crow, then follow him."

Evangelism in a World Of Rapid Change

By Daniel T. Niles

WHAT is God doing? There are many ways in which we can speak about what God is doing and four ways in which we can understand it. First, God is working to establish his Kingdom and he is asking us to be his witnesses. Now, to be his witnesses means something quite simple. We must first of all be people who are able to discern the hand of God in the events of our time. Then we must declare it to the world, tell the world that this is what the Lord is doing in our midst. A few years ago I heard an address by the Reverend Johannes Hamel who lives in East Germany. He was asked to speak about conditions there. The title which he chose was "What God Is Giving the Church in Eastern Germany through Its Communist Adversaries." The entire talk concerned the gifts they had received at the hands of God through the government of their country. It was a wonderful and exhilarating thing to listen to a man who was seeing the hand of God in the events of his time, even in the hour in which the church had to suffer oppression. The prophet of the Old Testament was able to say, thinking of Babylon, "the rod of God's anger;" he was able to say, thinking of Cyrus, the pagan, "Cyrus, my servant." God uses all kinds of instruments and methods.

Today there seems to be no seeking after what God is doing. There is only a concern for what the government is doing. Sometimes you can see; sometimes you cannot see; but often we do not see because we are not looking. In a world where happenings seem to be the result of secondary causes — nations and the leaders of the nations, power blocks, self-interest — when these factors explain what is happening in the world, when our newspapers tell us why this and that is happening in terms of the forces of our time, the Christian church in large measure seems unable to explain anything in terms of what God is doing. We are unable to witness because we have not seen. Our witness is not only to what God has done in Jesus Christ. Our witness has to be primarily to what God *is doing* in Jesus Christ. The deeds of God are not in the past only but in the future. "You shall be my witnesses." Now, you cannot witness, you cannot see, until, as Jesus said, "you are born again." When Nicodemus came to our Lord, our Lord said, "Verily, I say unto you, you cannot see the Kingdom of God unless you are born again." To put it another way, we are witnesses of God primarily by being part of the evidence ourselves.

There are three kinds of witnesses. If there is a motor car collision on the road, the man walking on the sidewalk can be a witness. He saw it happen. He is a spectator. You may have been in the car — nothing happened to you — you had only a mild shock. You are also a witness: You are involved. But the man who was knocked down and is lying dead on the road is also a witness: He is the victim. The Christian is asked to be a witness, not a spectator. From the spectator's stance you cannot see. You can be a witness to some extent by being involved in the accident but you are simply suffering from mild shock. Anybody who is in the church is very much in that situation. But Jesus said you must be more than that — you must also be a victim. God must have laid his hands upon you and mastered you and enslaved you, and you are there for all men to see, part of the evidence that God is at work.

Witnessing as Prophets

This witnessing to the work of God is what is called the prophetic task of the church. I know it is fashionable today to speak of the prophetic task of the church, but it usually means little more than making prophetic statements. Archbishop William Temple used to say that when Christian people say the church must *do* something, they usually mean the bishops must *say* something. But *that* is not

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DANIEL T. NILES *of Jaffna, Ceylon, is general secretary of the East Asia Christian Conference which is a regional association of Asian Protestant churches and councils. Mr. Niles holds the post of principal of Jaffna Central College, a Methodist school in Ceylon, and serves as pastor of a Methodist church in Jaffna. He delivered this address while filling the Harry Emerson Fosdick visiting professorship at Union Seminary, New York, last year.*

Mr. Niles, who is secretary of the Committee on Evangelism for the World Council of Churches, gives us depth, perspective and passion for evangelism in a world of rapid change.

the prophetic task. The task of the Old Testament prophet was to see the hand of God and declare it. He was able to do that because he was involved personally both in the world and in his own people. If you think of any of the Old Testament prophets — Amos, Habakkuk, Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel — they were men who took their position within the community. Yet when they spoke very few listened to them. The books of Hosea and Jeremiah became canon not until many years later. While they were still alive they were usually rejected by their own people. It may still be that this is what will happen and that it is what we ought to expect. If what you say as a witness is accepted by most people within the church, you can be sure you are wrong. But a prophet who leaves the community ceases to be a prophet. The prophet has to stay within and pay the price of staying within. He must be concerned with the world. Prophecy in the Old Testament was a conversation between the prophet and his people about the world, a conversation which the world overheard. That kind of prophecy is absent today because the church is out of touch, disengaged from the world, and when you are disengaged from the world you cannot be prophetic about it. The leaven must be in the lump. The leaven on the ledge gets sour and goes to waste. The church must get mixed up with the world before the church can talk about the world.

The other reason we are not prophetic is that within the church we do not have sufficient people to help us see the facts, the secular facts. Somebody has said that in order for the church to fully evangelize, a knowledge of sociology, political science and economics is as important as theology. You must know the world and understand it.

Witnessing as Apostles

There is in our Bible not only a prophetic but also an apocalyptic message. Two great books in the Old and New Testaments, Daniel and Revelation, were a written message of the church to the world. The language in which they are couched is irrelevant to our purpose at the moment. What is relevant is that the church here accepted the task of speaking directly to the world, and when it spoke directly to the world it spoke about the Lord. "Know this, oh King, our God is able to deliver us; our God will deliver us; but even if he does not, we will not worship your god." That is Daniel. When you read the book of Revelation you will find yourselves simply challenged to be true to your faith, whatever the cost. There is the endurance of the saints until the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ. "We will not burn incense to Caesar. We will not do such a thing." In speaking of this particular aspect, Dr. Visser 't Hooft said to me, "In 1941 when the Germans were occupying Holland and they asked the Church of Holland to adopt certain practices about the Jews, the Church of Holland simply wrote and said we cannot obey you because Christ is Lord." And you and we have to render our final account to him, to the final Judge. The Nazi commandant may or may not have understood what they were talking about, but at least the church was speaking its own language. Coming from New York I was reading the student magazine of Union Theological Seminary. They had at Union a group of students from Russia studying in this country who met with the students from Union Seminary. For a full evening after dinner they had a wonderful discussion. Afterwards the students from Union were assessing the discussion. I read letter after letter by the Union students who said, "There were three things striking in this discussion. First, the Soviet students were convinced that communism would win. They were the men who had definite confidence and hope. The Christians seemed to have no eschatology and no definite hope of their own. Secondly, the Soviet students talked their own materialistic language and we joined in the same vein, in a materialistic rather than a Christian way. Finally, the Soviet students talked with one voice, united in their common cause, and we talked with many voices." I think this is a true analysis of our situation. We cannot address the world unless we address it from our standpoint, as those who are speaking for their Lord. Conviction is born primarily and fundamentally when God, the Holy Spirit, awakens that condition. So little depends on us. All that God asks of us is faithfulness.

Providing the Point of Renewal

We have discussed what God is doing in terms of God establishing his Kingdom and the world under pressure of that Kingdom's advance. There is another way of talking about it, and that is to say that God is renewing his creation in Christ. A new humanity, a new man, is being created in Christ. And the task of the church is to meet in Christ this position, this point of convergence, this point of renewal, and to make this creation in Christ available to the world. And how are we to do it? First of all, from within the church. This is a point I do not need to labor. When we look at our churches — the manner in which congregational and denominational meetings and elections are conducted — is there any difference between the way the church conducts its affairs and the way our city and public officials manage their political affairs, mud-slinging and all? You see, we have already betrayed ourselves. What the world is asking for is some place where Christ is present and available, where the world can find the place from which its recreation can take place. A church disengaged from the world cannot provide the point of renewal. In the case of individual lives it is only Christian friendship that can make Christ available. We often

talk about Mahatma Gandhi. We rarely think about the Christian men with whom he surrounded himself or the Christian men who took it upon themselves as their Christian obligation to be with him and give him friendship. Fundamentally evangelism is not only the proclamation of the message; evangelism must also point to the Christ. And if you are merely pointing backwards to a Christ that lived two thousand years ago, you are pointing in the wrong direction. You are not asked to seek the living among the dead. Christ is present tense. You must be able to say, "Look there," pointing to a community or an individual: "there He is." A great deal of our evangelism is a denial of the risen Christ. Why are we not able to make evangelism contemporary? Because we are not able to point within the church, within the congregation, within our own lives.

Working for Proximate Goals

A third way of speaking about what God is doing is to say that God has planted in the hearts of men and women, those with faith and those without faith, the will to work for proximate goals and he blesses them with success: somebody here working for the lessening of tensions between political East and political West; somebody there working for political rights of colonial peoples; somebody over here simply working to feed the hungry. For us this means that we are to work with them because it is here that we realize the Holy Scripture's teaching that we are servants. In Great Britain and in our country it is common for officials in high and low positions to sign official letters "Your obedient servant." And yet Jesus said these "obedient servants" are not servants at all. They are what he called benefactors. The point that Jesus was making was a very simple one: He said a person who renders service is not a servant but a boss. A person who is in a position of authority and influence and plenty is the one who is able to serve, to give to those who are in need. Now people who are rendering service in that sense, Jesus said, are those who hold authority among us. "But, let it not be so." We are asked to be servants. The real servant, as Jesus interprets it, is a person who is at the mercy of the man he serves. When Jesus said "servant" he was thinking of slaves. But are we at the mercy of those whom we seek to serve? No, and this is where we fail. We are anxious as Christians to be in a position to serve. Jesus said, "That is not what I am talking about. What I am talking about is people who will so enter the situation of the world as to be at the mercy of it." Love others even when they do not want to be loved. He speaks of those who are willing to accept the cross. You remember the passage where Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God," and the Lord said, "On this foundation I will build my Church," and after that the first thing the church says in the person of St. Peter is, "Lord, you are talking about a cross." But we do not want the cross. That is what the church has been saying ever since: no cross.

When we say that God has given men the will to work for proximate goals, we must add that he has done one thing more: He has placed in the world people like you and me to be the agents of his cross, who can deal with these men of the world, giving them friendship and support by praying for them and carrying on their work. That is evangelism also. But it is a pastoral task of the church. This must be linked with God's own pastoral concern for people because, while it is true that God is at work in the world, it is persons that God is primarily concerned with. Thus the church is like the innkeeper. We are innkeepers, but the Good Samaritan rarely brings any wounded to our door and entrusts them to us. Our inns are empty. He would bring people to our door if he could trust us to be kind and gentle with those who have been bruised in life.

Seeing Christ in the World

I deliberately have said very little about what is technically called "rapid social change" because this one can learn from other sources. But if we are thinking in terms of evangelism, of making our Lord known so that he may be loved and obeyed, we must first learn to look at the world and there discern the figure of Christ. I want to close with an illustration. Very often Christian preaching and conversation is concerned with how we can bring Christ into our lives and into society so that we may live more happily, and have more security, stability and wholeness. We are concerned with our own lives. A friend of mine went to an exhibition in England of the paintings of the great artist, Constable. As he entered the hall where the paintings were hung, he saw the porter standing in front of one of the great pictures, looking at it very carefully. My friend said to himself, "I thought the porters knew very little of painting and art, but here is this man really enjoying that picture and looking at it very intently." But as he was thinking these thoughts he saw the porter put his hand in his pocket and pull out a comb and start combing his hair. There was a masterpiece of Constable, but all the porter was seeing was his own reflection in the glass. And here is this great world; but somehow, whenever we look at it, all we see is ourselves, *our* needs, *our* problems. We must learn to look at Christ and see *him* in the center of the picture and not ourselves. The risen Christ is in the world and wherever you seek him, he is on his way to Calvary. To some of us it may be given, as it was given to Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross for him. But to most of us it is only given to walk behind him as he goes up. Only he can pay the price of sin, either then or now.

Tonic for the Timid

By F. W. Schroeder

But the word of God grew and multiplied.
Acts 12:24.

SELDOM does one short sentence constitute a complete paragraph. The text of this sermon does. It stands by itself. Whether the author intended it so or whether editors and translators felt that it has no direct connection with what precedes and follows may be difficult to determine. But whatever the reason, this short sentence merits the attention it gets by virtue of standing alone. One might even want to italicize it, print it in bold, capital letters, yes, spread it across the top of the page as a headline; for one can say with good reason that it embodies the theme of the Book of Acts.

I

Luke's purpose in writing this story of what happened in the apostolic period is considered by some scholars to have been apologetic. His first treatise — the gospel bearing his name — was written to give his friend Theophilus an authentic account of the things most surely believed in the Christian community. His purpose in writing this second treatise appears to have been to convince this same friend that the things most surely believed had actually met with widespread acceptance. In effect, he was asking him to take a look at the record and take courage. The new faith that began in Jerusalem — Luke seems to be saying — already reached, in terms of first century geography, "to the end of the earth." And this had happened in the face of great odds and terrific resistance. Surely the wavering faith of Theophilus must have been restored to its original vitality as he read this record of the gospel's triumph. Here, indeed, is a tonic for timid souls.

Take a quick look at a few of the high spots of Luke's account. The story begins at Pentecost. As a result of fearless, fervent preaching three thousand people received the word and were baptized. Presently, we read, this number had increased to five thousand. And shortly the apostles found it difficult to keep up with the expanding program. What Professor Joseph Sittler not so long ago called "the maceration of the ministry" seems to have had its beginnings in the very first decade of the Christian era. For you will recall that the apostles appealed to the church for help, saying, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables." Not only did the word gain a foothold among the common people in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, it had also laid hold of a man of extraordinary training and ability, a certain Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, who later was to embark on a special mission to the gentile world. But even before Paul undertook his great missionary journeys an Ethiopian eunuch had been baptized by Philip and a Roman centurion by Peter, thus proving that such formidable barriers as race and religion could not impede the progress of the gospel.

Neither did culture prove to be a barrier. Everything that Luke records beyond this point serves to underscore the fact that the gospel had taken root in such centers of Greco-Roman culture as Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, Athens and Rome. Finally this thrilling account comes to a close with the declaration: "Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." And as a documentary footnote, we are told that Paul lived in Rome for two whole years, preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. So, says Luke to his friend Theophilus, you can see for yourself how the word of God grew and multiplied.

This is by no means the end of the story. This is only the beginning. The record we have in the biblical book called The Acts of the Apostles is only the first chapter of a much larger Book of Acts. In the nineteen centuries that have passed many, many chapters have been added. Professor

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This sermon has, for our time, a peculiar charm. There is not a wailing, off-beat, havoc-crying note in it; yet it escapes sentimental optimism entirely.

Latourette has tried to put the whole story into a seven-volume work, which he calls *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*. Very likely he would be the last to claim to have told the whole story. If John was justified in closing his Gospel with the remark that "the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" if everything which Jesus did had been put on paper, then we, after these nineteen centuries, can surely claim that if the full story of the gospel's growth were to be recorded in books, the library facilities of all theological seminaries would be far too small to contain them.

And the word of God is growing and multiplying in our day, too. It is amazing to note the growth of the church in the United States during the last two decades. Not so long ago less than 30 per cent of the people had church connections of some kind. Today, according to the latest figures, 63 per cent of the people are identified with some church or synagogue. And the church-going habits of these people are better, too.

II

Amazing as these facts and figures are, they nevertheless tend to leave us cold. Frequently they are dismissed with a cynical, "So what!" Every sign of growth we somehow manage to discount with a qualifying "but." Church membership is on the increase. "But," we say, "this is not due to any genuine religious revival; no, this is the way people identify themselves as members of the community." When it is pointed out that church attendance is up, so much in fact that many Protestant churches must have two services per Sunday to accommodate their members, someone is sure to counter: "But this does not mean that people are thirsting for the springs of living water. No, not that! They are conforming to what has become normative, proper, fashionable." Let someone rise to say that public interest in religion is growing and cite as evidence the popularity of religious books and the popularity of religion on college campuses and immediately comes the rejoinder: "But look at the moral decadence of our age. Stories of violence are spread across the pages of every newspaper, vandalism and juvenile delinquency are on the increase, domestic infidelity is the order of the day, obscene literature finds a ready market, and risqué movies pay off at the box office." Or suppose we try another angle and point out that the per capita giving of people for religious and benevolent causes has gone up another 4 per cent in the last two years. "But look," says the doubter; "look at what people spend for tobacco and liquor and cosmetics and all sorts of luxury items too numerous to mention." In some way or other every indication of growth is promptly written off as superficial and deceptive.

Expert observers and critical analysts of the contemporary scene that we are, we always see the fly in the ointment. Perhaps this is as it should be. Not for a moment am I suggesting that all is well in Zion. Neither am I saying that we should ignore or blink at the stupidity and perversity that come to light every day. Unfortunately, however, we are so habituated to seeing the fly in the ointment that we either devalue the ointment or do not see it all.

Would it be in order to try another approach for a change — the approach of Luke in the Book of Acts? Luke also makes extensive use of the qualifying "but"; however, in exactly the opposite way. Note, for example, the context of this text. Luke has been describing Herod's persecution of the leaders of the church. Herod had laid hands on the apostles. James, the brother of John, had been killed; and Peter had been imprisoned. "But," says Luke, "the word of God grew and multiplied." And this is by no means a singular instance of his use of "but." When we read how the elders in Jerusalem sought to restrain the apostles from speaking in the name of the risen Lord we come upon the phrase: "But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.' " When the elders became so enraged at the apostles' audacity that they wanted to kill them, Luke again introduced what follows with a resounding "but": "*But* a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel . . . stood up . . . and said to them: 'Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men. If this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them.' " So the story goes on. Throughout the account Luke makes it clear that neither Jewish fanaticism nor Roman cruelty were able to stop the growth of the gospel. Wherever he introduces the qualifying "but" it is not to accentuate the negative, but to accentuate the positive. Does this say anything to the fainthearted in the church today?

III

Paul wrote in his letter to Timothy: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." Could this possibly be true as well of Luke's word to Theophilus? Does it not reprove and correct us at the point of yielding all too readily to a debilitating, devitalizing skepticism and a corroding cynicism? One suspects that the critical — not to say cynical — appraisal of the current revival of interest in religion is due not so much to the prophetic capacity of separating chaff from wheat as to the acids of modernity that have slowly eaten away our confidence in the power of the gospel.

When one listens at the wailing wall of the clergy one seems to hear subtle satanic whispers of doubt: "Surely, it can't be that the word should

grow and multiply as it seems to be doing in our day." But who am I, or who are you, to set limits to what the word of God can or cannot do? Or who am I that I should be able to look into the hearts of churchgoing men and women and say: "This is only surface religion" or "this is but another manifestation of the cult of conformity"? Again, who am I that I should debunk religion on college campuses and write it off as being "merely academic"? There could be more genuine religious commitment abroad in the land among the intelligentsia as well as the common people than some of us are ready to admit.

This word from the pen of Luke might also be profitable for training in righteousness, specifically for training in patience. And patience is a form of righteousness. Isaiah declared the Word of the Lord would not return empty. But must it accomplish its purpose according to our timetable? In this connection it is worth recalling the eager-beaver farm hands who wanted to pull out the weeds that came up along with the wheat. They expected their employer to say: "Go to, boys; get rid of the weeds!" But he didn't. Instead he advised them: "Let both grow together until the harvest." But the harvest is so long in coming. And we want to see the triumph of righteousness now. This lack of immediate results seems to have troubled the disciples, too. At least four of the parables in Matthew 13 seem to have their setting in the impatience and the skepticism of the twelve. They could not understand how Jesus could speak of the Kingdom as having come when the Lord of the Kingdom was being rejected before their eyes. By means of these parables Jesus bade them take a long look; and also a more realistic look.

Growth in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is, on the whole, slow and imperceptible within ourselves as well as in others. Do you recall Longfellow's little poem about the arrow and the song? The arrow was lost from view as soon as it left the bow, and so was the song that was breathed upon the air. Eye and ear were unable to follow them in their flight. But what a pleasant surprise when

> Long, long afterward, in an oak
> I found the arrow still unbroke;
> And the song, from beginning to end,
> I found again in the heart of a friend.

Discoveries of this kind are not at all unusual in the moral and spiritual realm. And such discoveries always put our pessimism and our skepticism to shame, as indeed they should.

If we will put alongside Luke's remarkable account of the gospel's growth the equally remarkable account of Christianity's expansion in the world and its gradual transformation of people and social structures — largely so gradual as to be imperceptible — we should be able to face the future with more confidence. Let it be admitted that the outlook for a speedy conquest of the world by Christianity is not as bright as it was shortly after the turn of this century when missionaries went to distant lands, speaking confidently of "the evangelization of the world in this generation." A good many things have happened since then to change the climate. We have every reason to be more sober-minded. Communism is on the march; and there is an upsurge of nationalism and national religions in the lands where Christianity is very much a minority faith. In its evangelistic outreach the church is encountering all sorts of roadblocks along the way. But I trust we are not yet ready to admit defeat. If we are, we might as well close our churches and seminaries here and now. But the arm of the Lord has not been shortened. Neither has his word lost its power.

When Martin Luther saw the combined powers of church and state arrayed against him, and the outcome of the Reformation seemed to be hanging precariously in the balances, he affirmed his confidence and his courage by writing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." As if hurling defiance at his adversaries, he declared:

> The Prince of darkness grim,
> We tremble not for him;
> His rage we can endure,
> For lo! his doom is sure,
> One little word shall fell him.

This one little word is the mighty word of God. It has grown. It is growing. It will continue to grow. Proclaim it from the housetops and so allay the fears and misgivings of all timid souls.

SERMONS IN THE NEWS

CONFLICTING views on a perennial issue were recently the subjects of sermons by two nationally known American preachers. On one side of Fifth Avenue Dr. Norman Vincent Peale said, "The vigorous old Gospel has become diluted with a curious blend of humanitarianism, socialism and every other nicey-nicey-ism to the end that it has lost its appeal to the people." On the other side Dr. John Sutherland Bonnell replied, "Christianity is concerned with everything that impinges on the life of man. The moment we retreat from that, we'd better lock our church doors and quit . . . Jesus sought not only the salvation of the individual but the regeneration of the social order. He was the redeemer of society as well as of souls." One street; two ways.

When Career, Marriage and Christian Commitment Meet Their Kadesh-Barnea

On Turning Back

By William M. Elliott, Jr.

Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt? . . . Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt. Numbers 14:3, 4.

AFTER many months of marching across burning Egyptian sands, the children of Israel stand within fifty miles of the Promised Land, the object of their hopes and dreams. Moses, the leader of the young nation, calls a halt and, at the command of Jehovah, sends twelve choice men ahead to spy out the land. The twelve spies were to check and report on three things: the fertility of the land — whether it was good or bad, fat or lean; the people who inhabited the land — whether they were strong or weak, few or many; the cities — whether they were fragile camps or fortified strongholds.

After forty days the twelve spies returned to Kadesh-Barnea and made two reports, a majority report and a minority report. Ten of the men brought in "an evil report of the land." They readily admitted that the land was good, flowing "with milk and honey," but they were dismayed by the strength of the fortifications and by the size of the Canaanitish warriors. So they concluded: "We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."

But two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, were optimistic. They were aware of the difficulties but were men of vision, faith and courage. They were confident that with Jehovah's help Israel could defeat the enemy and possess the land. So they said: "Let us go up at once, and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it." But the people were weary of body and tired of mind and were in no mood for another brisk challenge. The hardships they had had to endure on their long trek had diluted their optimism and worn thin their courage. Consequently, as they listened to the report of the spies, the obstacles impressed them far more than the opportunities. They lost heart and literally "fell apart at the seams" emotionally. And they said one to another, "Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt!"

I

It is an ancient story, but what happened there at Kadesh-Barnea happens all the time. The temptation to turn back — to hanker for the old life with its familiar ways and false security — plagues us all. So often when high adventure beckons, we shrink back, lacking the courage to go on to what is new and better. We do this in personal matters and in social situations. We prefer the certainties of the known to the possibilities of the unknown. The thought of change intimidates us.

Here, for example, is a man who would like very much to change his present business connection, who wants to stop working for a corporation and go in business for himself. This is what he longs to do and in his heart feels in the long run would be better for him. But when he is about to cut the moorings which bind him to the old life, he cannot bring himself to do it, particularly if he has reached middle age, the fatal forties. He is allured by the possibilities of the new. They kindle his imagination. But he cannot get up sufficient courage to make the break. Ahead are risks and uncertainties and possible defeat, while behind him, in his old job, is security. And besides, others are dependent upon him and he must think of them. No, he must not take the risk. If he were younger he might do it but not now. Better hang on to what he has than to run the risk of losing everything. After all, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Would it not be better for him to go back to Egypt? And that is what he does. A promised land beckons; his desire is to move in and possess it, but he takes counsel of his fear and turns back.

Of course life is full of risks. No matter what

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This sermon makes a close and faithful use of the biblical narrative for the form of the message. The inferences drawn from the Scripture are plain, direct and compelling.

we do, or where we go, we cannot escape hazards and perils. That is the nature of things and what worthy soul wants it otherwise? How "stale, flat and unprofitable" life would be without risks and uncertainties. As someone has observed, the trouble with a dead certainty is that it is dead! Life is full of risks and no man can escape them. They are in Egypt as well as in Canaan. So one must walk by faith. One must venture. Nothing dared, nothing gained. There can be no progress, personal or social, without men and women of the pioneering spirit, who, "fed up" with Egypt, scorn the risks and move on into better things. The way ahead is never certain, but God is; and he walks beside all men and women of faith. As Caleb said to the people at Kadesh-Barnea: "The Lord is with us, fear them not."

II

So part of the trouble with the Israelites was that they lacked the courage to venture into the unknown, even though they knew in their hearts that it was right and that they could count on God's help. But there was another trouble: *these people were not sufficiently committed.* They had not finally and irrevocably deserted Egypt. And that is one major reason why they did not proceed. That is why, having started out, they did not follow through but wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Paran for forty long and tragic years.

Complete and wholehearted commitment is necessary to success in any of life's great ventures. Many marriages fail because the parties to the marriage contract have not really committed themselves, have not done so finally and irrevocably. They think they have, but subconsciously if not consciously, they are thinking that they can turn back if they have to. Many couples in these days of cheap and easy divorce enter the marriage relationship thinking that if things do not work out according to their hopes, they can always get a divorce. They never tackle the problems which arise in their marriage with any firm resolution simply because they really do not think they have to. They start out with romantic fervor and good intentions, but one day they reach Canaan with its complicated difficulties, and instead of tackling the situation with dogged firmness, they begin asking themselves: "Would it not be better to go back to Egypt?"

To toy with the idea that if adjustments prove difficult and things get into a tangle, we can always escape through the divorce court, is a psychological handicap difficult to overcome in the achievement of a happy home. People usually can find a way if they think they must. They work out their solution with intelligence and determination when they are convinced that they have to, that divorce is out of the question, and that they simply must succeed.

Young people, when you marry, commit yourselves completely. You have covenanted before God and with each other to be faithful "in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health" so long as you both shall live. Therefore, set your mind now on success. Never entertain for one moment the thought of turning back. Keep saying to yourself, "If we fulfill the conditions of a successful marriage we can have it." Dr. Frank H. Richardson concluded an article on marriage problems with this statement: "It is my reasoned conviction, carried out by my experience, that any two people who have loved each other well enough to marry, can make a go of their marriage *if they set their minds and hearts upon accomplishing it.*"*

III

We see the importance of a complete out-and-out commitment in another realm, the realm of Christian discipleship. Here too people fail simply because their engagement to be the Lord's is superficial and half-hearted. There are many who, making a promising start with God, never possess the promised land of spiritual power and peace. They never come to any real maturity in Christian faith and experience, and the reason is that they are not fully and finally and irrevocably committed. They are not in this thing all the way. In Andrew Bonar's words, they are "half-decided, never altogether and with full fervor the Lord's." Their intentions are good at the time of their confession, but when they begin to feel the rigorous demands and disciplines of life in Christ, they shrink back. When the cross rises out of Canaan, they muse: "Would it not be better for me to go back to Egypt?"

The trouble is that these people have never really renounced Egypt. It is still in their minds, and to some extent, in their affections. They have never made a clean and decisive break with "the world, the flesh and the devil." And so they slip back into the old ruts of moral defeat and partial living. With God dreaming great dreams for them, they turn back to what Dr. Arthur Gossip aptly called a "pinched and tame existence." This problem has been with us throughout the Christian era. Our Lord met it in the days of his flesh. People wanted to follow him but with reservations. But Jesus had to have all or nothing. To one man who held back from a complete allegiance, he said: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Paul encountered this same problem in Galatia. Some new converts in that region were finding the new life exacting and hazardous, and so were about to turn back to the old slavery — the dead formalism and legalism of Judaism. The apostle wrote these people a letter in which he made this earnest plea: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Do you remem-

* *Woman's Home Companion*, June 1942. Italics mine.

ber Demas? He was a convert who did not get beyond Kadesh-Barnea in his Christian discipleship. He made a grand beginning but failed near the edge of the Promised Land. He fell by the wayside, "having loved this present world." The man's commitment had no doubt been sincere but it was not thorough. He was only a nominal Christian. And so, when the old life called, he gave up his discipleship and "departed into Thessalonica."

And Demas is still with us. One of the most baffling problems confronting the Christian enterprise in our day is the large number of disinterested, inactive and nonworshiping church members. You will find them on every church roll. Their number is legion. They are the despair of every pastor — these people who have made an impressive beginning in the Christian way, but who were not deeply rooted and have fallen back into Egypt.

THE MOURNERS BENCH

By G. Hobab Kish

THERE is a story about an author who needed money, a not unusual situation. He wired his publisher: "How much advance will you give for a novel of 60,000 words?" The publisher wired back: "How big are the words?" Some of the stuff published today seems to emphasize bulk and nothing else. How many books are written that would be much better condensed and shortened! We develop jargon for every intellectual discipline so that two sentences will reveal what school the writer comes from and what high-sounding nonsense will be used to cover his lack of thought. Words are chosen with paralysis in their muscles and leukemia in their blood. Lifeless, dull, abstract, academic, they kill any interest a man might have in the subject. The mimeograph machine (that invention of the devil) enables every bore to spread his dullness across the earth and so mutilate and cheapen words that they become hated, or worse, unnoticed.

The mimeographed tripe that comes across my desk and slides rapidly into the wastebasket is simply terrifying. Every committee sends its minutes and every organization passes resolutions. Every secretary and bureaucrat sitting around with nothing to do suddenly get the great idea: "Let's send out another mailing." I can only assume that they are frustrated authors and will get their dull words and tiresome style on paper if it kills them, and sometimes I wish it would. There is a law — call it Kish's Law — that the less an organization is needed, the more printed matter it will distribute. And the corollary is that the less it accomplishes, the more elaborate will be its annual report.

But brethren, before you lose all control, turn back to the Bible. One of my former colleagues on a theological seminary faculty points out that while the Greeks are the people of the eye, the Jews are the people of the ear. They have a sense of words and their language is alive. They speak, they tell, they announce, they proclaim. God has told them what is good and he has commanded them what to do. In the Bible you will find speech that is living and vital, unforgettable and inescapable. The Old Testament tells the Joseph story in thirteen brief chapters while Thomas Mann takes four volumes. Modern novelists write long books about biblical characters and make one-tenth the impression made by the short verses in the Bible. Here is the Book that knows about the miracle and wonder of words. "In the beginning, was the Word."

Classrooms are notorious places so far as dead language is concerned. The educational experts develop a speech that is fit for no habitation save a cemetery. Any man established in some theoretical ivory tower is ultimately doomed to talk like a walking ghost. It is in the market place, the home, the ball park, the shop, the church, where language is alive. Every man who would speak or write must be with all kinds of real people in all kinds of real situations. John Wesley and one of his preachers came upon two women quarreling near Billingsgate. Their language was forceful but not polite. The preacher suggested they move along, but Wesley said, "Stay, Sammy, stay, and learn to preach."

I listened to a long-winded speech delivered on a conference floor not long ago. Turning to a friend of mine from Texas, I asked what the speech was all about. He answered: "A friend of his has his tail caught in a crack, and he wants us to help him get it out." How pointed! How adequate! How fine!

It may be that one of this generation's greatest crimes is the debasing of our language. When I think of TV commercials, I am revolted. The Madison Avenue boys have done more to reveal the essential tawdriness of our civilization than any other single force. What shall our defense be when we stand to be judged by the One who said: "I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned"?

Pray for a Miracle

By Robert L. Eddy

THE fourteenth of August is a day which brings remembrance of the end of the Second World War. We who remember it recall our feelings of relief. The strain of privation and worry was gone. The great stress of having to fight, if not hate, our neighbors, was lifted; and we poured forth our thanks and our joy in many ways.

On each anniversary of this day, each of us turns to his own kind of observance. We remember with honor our fallen soldiers. We remember all those on the other side who died, including a few hundred more citizens of Hiroshima who recently died from the radiation effects, delayed but fatal, of the first atomic bomb, one of our more dubious presents to the world. And, of course, we offer prayers for peace; how can it be otherwise? We know that peace cannot come by prayers alone, that peace comes only out of the whole human climate of wisdom, understanding, patience, sacrifice and love. Yet prayers for peace may help lead us toward trying harder to create that better climate.

Today, in the background of our prayers for peace, is our thought of the whole human plight, the dilemma of society today: "What can we make of it?" This means both understanding it and then transforming it. It is always difficult for a minister to preach to his people as though they were the whole of America; they are so few that his effort seems almost futile. Yet how else save from these congregations led by conscientious ministers, will the better society ever come about? If we accomplish nothing else, we are reminded that as a part of America, we are America; what we think and do and say counts in the final balance, and maybe long before. And so we as Americans face steadily the world's plight and ask God what we can do about it.

Here in the church we are reminded of the enormous expanse of time in human history. It is two thousand years back to the Bible, and the Bible story goes back over two thousand years before that. Of this long period, the American Republic measures only one hundred and seventy years. One sure lesson from the Bible is that human governments are not eternal. The Bible speaks of the coming end of all the kingdoms of this world, and many Christians devoutly believe that the speedy end of human institutions is at hand.

When we ask why our "American Way" is not to last forever, we are given the answer on moral grounds: We have not been good enough to deserve enduring. Thus writes Thomas Merton in his engrossing book, *The Seven-Storey Mountain:* Man has been so wicked after God has been so good to him that he has well earned his own doom. He is living on borrowed time already.

A Dreadful Alternative

There is still another doom which may await us, and very nearly as dreadful. Perhaps the atomic war will not come and we will go on just as we are. Just as we *are?* Is that bad? Well, stop and think just *how* we are. A thoughtful British playwright some years ago wrote a little play about the end of the world. His point was very subtle. The action concerned a few ordinary people going along, day after day, with the same little foibles, the same passion for trifles, the same blindness to any vision of a really different, better life, the same petty suspicions, hatred and gross selfishness, as many people have today. This for the playwright was to be man's most exquisite punishment: to traverse eternally the same small ruts around and around, forever going nowhere, forever being nothing. A painless doom, but how deadly!

So we come to the command for today: Pray for a miracle; pray that we may all be saved. May we be saved from the devices we made in the last

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ROBERT L. EDDY *left the United Congregational Church of Little Compton, Rhode Island, this past March to become minister of North Congregational Church, Woburn, Massachusetts. Mr. Eddy, a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Divinity School, has also served three other Congregational pastorates. He is the compiler and editor of* Pastoral Prayers Through the Year, *published in 1959 by Scribner's.*

This sermon celebrates the end of the Second World War with a plea for prayer. It is of such substance, such earnestness, such persuasive expression as to make all who hear it pray for the miracle of God's Kingdom and God's peace.

war which may well make the next war *really* the last war. May we, further and deeper, be saved from ourselves. If we are pointed to the brink of the last abyss, whence only a miracle can deliver us, let us pray for that miracle. Let us pray for the now seemingly impossible: that a moral awakening may break upon mankind, and men may find that they *are* their brothers' keepers. But how can any man in his right mind believe that any such staggeringly great miracle could ever come to pass?

A Spectacular Precedent

I have purposely chosen for a Scripture lesson the story of one of the most outlandish miracles in the Bible. In Joshua 10:12 we read:

> and he said in the sight of Israel
> "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;
> and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon."
> And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed
> until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.

To those who believe the Bible literally, there are few passages harder to defend. Even in the days before Copernicus it was difficult. There is a much larger question involved, the question God asks Job: Why should God leave the governing of the stars in their courses so vast that the mind of man cannot even contemplate them, to come into one tiny speck of whirling matter and on a speck of that speck help out one miserable little band of human ruffians against another just because he had been asked to?

These are questions which arise for anyone applying scientific analysis to an ancient work of beauty, and the answers are about as satisfying as a chemist's analysis of a rose. To get out of the Joshua-story problem, simply ask yourself, "Why was this story told?" The last thing the author had in mind was astronomy or physics. He was trying to show how God helps people do what they cannot do alone when it has to be done. The Israelites did not have superior men or materials, nor terrain or knowledge. They had nothing but superior faith in God and in themselves in covenant with God. Joshua needed more time to break up his enemies before nightfall lest they regroup under cover of darkness. And God gave him time enough, and once more the Hebrew went on his perilous way through history. This, then, is the message of Joshua for the Hebrews of later ages and for today and for all men everywhere: God will give you time to do the thing you think there is not time for. When you come to your great crisis and your own means are not enough to get by, and all you have learned points you only to doom, then pray for something you do *not* know: pray for a miracle!

This is not a despairing cry. After all, miracles happen all the time. A miracle is not an exception to the laws of nature; it is a work of God within laws he knows but beyond our comprehension.

Spectacular miracles were pivotal men and events which have shaped history: Martin Luther at the Emperor's court, declaring that he believed with all his heart that salvation came from his own faith and not from the church; the Pilgrim Fathers with the germ of the American Commonwealth in their frail bark on the mountainous seas, sailing on unafraid. By what laws of human nature known at that time did *they* operate?

We all know of individual lives which do not shape history, yet exceed all the bounds to human endurance. Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote in the *Reader's Digest* about the most unforgettable character she had ever met, the dramatist and drama critic Edward Sheldon, a very brilliant soul who at the age of thirty became entirely crippled with arthritis so that he was bedridden for the rest of his life. A little later he became blind. The arthritis choked his voice down to a mere whisper. But this did not daunt the spirit of Edward Sheldon. He lay well-dressed on his bed and received a constant stream of friends who came not to help him but to be helped. He advised fellow playwrights on their plays, sometimes whispering out whole new scenes for them, yet never wanting any credit. Sometimes he would help people with other problems of life. Mrs. Lindbergh once said to him, "I suppose we should be lenient and forgiving with others and strict with ourselves." "Oh, no," said Sheldon, "You must be able to forgive yourself too. That is the hardest of all." If a paralyzed man could be the deathless inspiration of his many friends, is there not hope for the Western world even with its blindness and hardness of heart?

Pray that this miracle may come. Pray while there is still time, good time, that the few of good will and something to sacrifice may exert their force on the side of right, that the scales of justice may be tipped over to the survival, indeed the fullness, of life for all mankind!

Feeling the Need

In order to pray for this miracle, you must first feel with anguish the need for it. It is no use listening further if you think all will be right if wages stay up and prices go down and peoples of various races, nations and conditions stay right where they are and do not bother us. No, you have to open the window of your imagination upon the ocean of miserable humanity and feel just a little of its hunger, its loneliness, its bitterness, its despair. You have to feel it as the Japanese Christian Toyohiko Kagawa felt it when, thinking thus of our world's woes, he wrote, "I sit up at night and listen to the agony of God." What we do to assuage our misery without God's counsel and help only makes matters worse. Our bigger barns make others hungrier. Our bigger

bombs make them more frightened. Our greater incomprehension of them makes them more despairing. We should reach up through the maze of our own devices and plans and seek the hand of God to pull us up.

In order to pray for a miracle you must believe that a miracle can happen, and that your prayers will help bring it about. To pray for a miracle you must believe that humanity does not have to plod along in the same ruts century after century. You remind yourself that with God all things are possible, that God can spare us and lead us into a new way of life in which fears and hatreds are forgotten among nations because they have disappeared in homes and villages first.

Recognizing Our Deliverer

And you must believe in a bringer of miracles. We who think we have recovered the true image of Christ in our paintings and ideas of him would be well warned to think of another village where they knew him too well. In his home town they said, "Why, isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph the carpenter?" And he could do no mighty work there because of their unbelief. Heaven forbid that we should perish merely because we did not recognize our deliverer when he was among us.

And then, in order that your miracle may come, you have to do whatever else there is to be done to bring it about. For God may sometimes use very ordinary, humble means to work his miracles. Remember Naaman, the Syrian king, who asked Elisha to cure his leprosy? Elisha granted the king's request and told him to go down and wash in the river Jordan. "Not the Jordan," cried the king, "that dirty ribbon of mud!" He wanted to go to Abana or Pharpar, both of them no doubt highly recommended watering-places where the wealthy went for a cure and various other advantages. But no, it was wash in the Jordan, or stay leprous, so Naaman washed in the Jordan. America is ready to give of its substance, but is she ready to give herself to the waiting world? She would do well to look around for dirty Jordans of sacrificial service on unattractive fronts if her heart is really in it when she prays for peace.

Then, we have to be able to recognize the miracle when it comes. Very likely the miracle is on its way to us right now. The classic statement about all this in Christian doctrine is, "The Kingdom of God is coming. You cannot stop it. You cannot slow it down or even hasten it. The only question is, where will *you* be on the moral scale when it gets here?" God uses us to bring in the Kingdom, and we can refuse to let him use us or we can surrender to his call. But we do not flatter ourselves by supposing that the rule of righteousness in Christ will be anything we shall ever bring about either by our goodness or that of our descendants. It is enough if we can see His will and do it in our time. We are by no means sure that the coming of his Kingdom is to be preceded by the visible destruction of our visible world. Would the loving God make so miraculously beautiful a world as ours, peopled by so many wonderful people, and then dash it all to pieces like a child dissatisfied with his plaything? So ask many thoughtful people today. Whatever form the Kingdom takes, we may be sure of two things: first, that it is a Kingdom in the moral and spiritual realm, and secondly, that it concerns each one of us personally and directly.

No matter how sure we are that the Kingdom is coming, we cannot be neutral. We cannot let our labors flag. The London citizens during the blitz of 1940-1944 had no doubts whatever about the outcome of the war. But this did not prevent a single citizen from doing his duty at his vocation or on his post in civilian defense. One reason the end was going to be all right, he knew, was that he was doing his job. It is even so as we face the coming of the Kingdom of God. We pray that it may come and we back up our prayers with our lives because we know that it will come to us and through us; we want to be ready to meet the King.

Pray for a miracle. Pray, "Thy Kingdom come." Strive so to live and work and pray that the saintliness of today may become the commonplace of tomorrow. Live in the faith that your life as a prayer widens out to hearten others until it heartens all. You can even become a miracle yourself.

Thoughts on Preaching

✚ THE DICTION of the preacher is that of the historian and dramatist, not that of the philosopher, for preaching appeals *by* the history-drama of the Event of Christ *to* the willed drama of men's daily history. — *George A. Buttrick*
(From *Sermons Preached in a University Church*, Abingdon, 1959)*

✚ NO SOUND homiletical method exists until it comes into being in actual work on a given text or theme, and it also means that no method is ever sound unless it is right for the particular text or theme with which a man is working at the time. — *H. Grady Davis*
(From *Design for Preaching*, Muhlenberg, 1958)*

✚ OF HIS SON who left the mission field for the government service: "My son Felix has shrivelled from a missionary into an ambassador." — *William Carey*

✚ SAID of Seneca: "His thoughts are excellent, if only he had the right to utter them."

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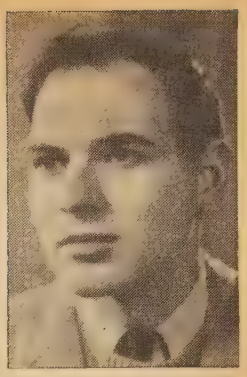
Personal Belief in God Precedes Philosophy and Theology



The Lord of All Mankind

By Diogenes Allen

THE first two chapters of Genesis dealing with the creation of the world tell us at least four things: that God created the world; the order in which God made everything in six days; that everything God made was good; that in honor of God one should refrain from working on the Sabbath. But we all know that most of us do not feel that it is sinful to work on Sundays; that everything in the world is not good; and those who know anything about geology and evolution realize that it took millions of years for the earth to assume its present form, rather than six days. With the help of telescopes and the new rockets we realize the vastness of the universe. Did God really create it all?

This is just the beginning of all the questions one can raise about this particular Scripture reading. But generally we get around them all. We do this by ignoring the stories of creation in the Bible. We simply say, "Things had to come from somewhere." This is a solid argument, we feel. Because of it we do not have to defend the Bible stories. We do not even have to read them. When we say the Apostle's Creed, the part of which we feel most certain is the first part: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." Someone could give us an argument about other parts of the Creed: the part about Jesus Christ as the Son of God, or about the resurrection of the body, but we can give anyone a difficult time over the belief in God the Creator. For we can always say, "Well, things had to come from somewhere." This argument — an argument all of us have thought of at one time or another — is not good enough. It isn't good for two reasons: one reason is a philosophic one, and the other reason is a religious one.

First let us see what philosophy has taught us. Philosophers have examined the idea, "Since there is a world, there must be a creator; otherwise, how could there be a world?" One philosopher in particular, Thomas Aquinas, has much to say about this matter. He argued that there must be a creator since there is a world. His arguments developed this simple idea and for several hundreds of years were generally considered sound. Unlike people today who say, "God's existence cannot be proved," for centuries men said, "God's existence is proven to be true. We know there is a God."

But about the time of the Revolutionary War two different philosophers, one in England and one in Germany, examined Aquinas' arguments for the existence of God, and both of them believed that his arguments were not sound. They both agreed that God's existence could neither be proven nor disproven. One of these men, Immanuel Kant, was a Christian; the other, David Hume, was not. To this day philosophers argue as to who is right, Aquinas or Kant and Hume. The most capable philosophers disagree. The Roman Catholic Church asserts that Aquinas is right. It claims that God's existence can be proven; there must be a creator, for the world had to come from somewhere. Protestant thinkers are divided. The trend at the present time among Protestants is that God's existence cannot be proven.

But the point is this. We might think we are on solid ground when we say, "Of course there is a God, for how could there be a world if there was no God to make it?" We probably feel more confident about this than anything else in our entire religion, but philosophers who have examined this line of reasoning have asked some disturbing questions. For example, "Why could there not be more than one God who made the universe? If God made the world, then is he not an evil God, for there is so much pain and ugliness in the world? If God made the world, then who made God?" Therefore, philosophy has taught us that the argument, "There must be a God because things had to come from somewhere," is not an argument that proves the existence of *our* God. For *our* God, the one our

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This sermon is included in this issue to illustrate a specific form of preaching to a particular situation. For a fuller explanation see the author's letter in Pulpit Post on page 2.

religion talks about, is a *good* God. But the idea of "something" making the universe does not tell us whether this "something" is good or evil. It cannot tell us whether there is more than one of these "somethings" or not. It cannot tell us whether this "something" who made our world was itself made by something else.

Origin of the Creation Story

Now let us look at the religious reason why we cannot say, "I believe in God the Creator *because* things must have come from somewhere." The reason is simply that the people who wrote the Bible did *not* say: "You know all this around us must have come from somewhere. Something must have made it. So let us put a story at the beginning of the Bible and tell how it was made." This was not the way it happened at all! The stories of creation are not supposed to explain to us how the world was made, how light was created and why there is a moon and stars.

These stories were written for another purpose. The Jews were slaves in Egypt. They had gone to Egypt hundreds of years before in a time of famine. About seventy of them went to Egypt, but as time went on they grew to hundreds and then thousands. An Egyptian king made slaves of them and forced them to work on buildings and roads, dredge channels and build pyramids. Then one of the two greatest events in their history occurred. Moses, a great leader, organized the Jews and led them out of Egypt. They believed a god named "Yahweh" had sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt to a land Yahweh was going to give them as their own. For forty years they wandered over deserts until finally they entered Palestine. This was the promised land that their god Yahweh was going to give them. They had to fight to get into Palestine; but they conquered it, and there established for the first time in history a Jewish nation.

This event of leaving Egypt and establishing their own nation is called the "Exodus." The word "exodus" means "out of." They came *out of* Egypt into a new land. For the Jews the Exodus was one of the most important events in their entire history. It made them a nation. It was important to them, moreover, because their god Yahweh had led them out of slavery into their own land.

What has all this to do with the story of the creation of the world? Just this. In those days there were many gods. Every nation had its own gods: the Egyptians, the Greeks, and so forth. The Jews wanted to say, "Our God, Yahweh, is the *only* God. He is over all nations, he is over the whole earth, he is even the God of the heavens and the stars. Yahweh *alone* is God."

But how could the Jews express this belief: their God as the only God, the ruler of all things? They chose to do it this way. They took an old story about how a god had made the heavens and the earth, the stars and the moon, and they changed it and made it into a story about their God, Yahweh, and how Yahweh created the world and everything in it. In this way they could say: If Yahweh made everything, then Yahweh, our special God, is the one who rules the whole earth and the whole universe. He must have control over everything because he alone made everything. By telling a story about Yahweh as the creator of the universe they could say: Yahweh, our God, the one who brought us out of slavery in Egypt, he is not just *our* God, he is *the* God, the *only* God.

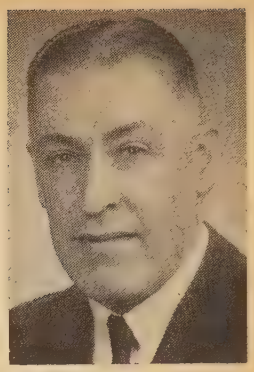
Now, the Jews were not telling a lie when they took an old story about a creation and then put their God into the story as the one who made all things. Instead, they were expressing their faith that the God who brought them out of slavery in Egypt is the only God. They were expressing their faith that he controls everything — the earth, the sky, the nations. You see, the Jews were not trying to tell us that there must be a God because things had to come from somewhere. They *already* believed in God. With the story of creation they are saying that *their* God is the only God, that *their* God controls everything. They express this by telling a story of how the world was created.

Its Meaning for Today

But what about us today? We were not slaves in Egypt. What does it mean to us to say, "God created the world"? For us who live in a time in which we are afraid that evil rules the world, it means everything. We find it difficult to believe in Jesus Christ. We find it difficult to believe that to love men, to suffer for them, to live for the Kingdom of God is the smart thing to do. Power, money and pleasure on the one hand, suffering, troubles and death on the other, seem to be the bases of the world. The love of Christ does not seem to have any chance of surviving in this rough and tumble world, a world that very likely may be destroyed in our lifetime.

But like the Jews who said their God who brought them out of slavery in Egypt is not just their God, that he is *the* God in control of all things, for he made all things — we too must believe that Jesus Christ who loves us, who has saved us by his cross, is not just a man, *just our private God,* but the one who controls all things. *For he was sent by the one who made all things.*

As Christians the story of creation tells us that Jesus is not just a man with some teachings, but the One who was sent by the God who created all things. The reason we affirm our belief in God's creation of the universe is not because we believe things had to come from somewhere, but because we wish to affirm our belief that Jesus Christ is not just our God, but the Lord and Savior of *all* mankind.



Grounds for Belief in God

By C. Willard Fetter

"I COULDN'T stand it unless I believed in something." These words were spoken to a pastor by a person who was going through fire and flood. They echoed the sentiment of the 27th Psalm: "I had fainted unless I believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." That man too went through the deep waters of affliction; life got him down; then he said, "I had fainted unless I had believed."

Faith is important; the object of our faith is more important. Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher-emperor of Rome, was one of the noble pagans of antiquity. In the midst of corruption he maintained personal integrity and honor. Yet he was constantly crushed by life's burdens. His stoic philosophy helped him to remain firm, as he said, "to keep my rudder true." But it gave him no ultimate faith to lift him.

The difference between the psalmist and Marcus Aurelius is to be found in their faith. Both were crushed by life, but one believed in the goodness of God; the other knew only blind fate. The difference between a Christian, however limited his education, and the unbeliever, however intellectual, is seen in the way they meet misfortune. One may keep a stiff upper lip; the other draw upon the resources of God.

We need to believe in something if we are going to be something. But our faith must be more than sentimentalism if it is to stand the test of trouble. The important question is, "In what do you believe?" So we shall come back to the fundamentals of the life of faith and think together about some of our basic Christian beliefs. Let us start at the beginning — with God. "But surely," you say, "we can take God for granted. Of course we believe in Him."

Perhaps that is our trouble; we do take God for granted as we take our next meal, or our friends, or, all too often, our family. We are not alive to what these persons mean to us or what God really means to us. The persons and things we take for granted are frequently the ones which deserve the most attention and thought.

For many people God is dead or has never lived or, as Shailer Mathews once said, "is emeritus." For instance, Sir Julian Huxley said recently that all "religions are destined to disappear." He made that statement in the University of Chicago chapel on Thanksgiving Day, as part of the convocation of distinguished scientists celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. His topic was "The Evolutionary Vision." As once, some 300 million years ago the amphibians left the water and learned to live on land or in the air, so now, he said, man has made a breakthrough to psychological evolution. "Our feet still drag in the biological mud," he said, "even though we can lift our heads into the conscious air." But to really free himself, Huxley says, man must stop "creeping for shelter to the arms of a divinized father-figure whom he has himself created and stop trying to escape responsibility by sheltering under the umbrella of divine authority." Why does the new breakthrough to psychological evolution mean the end of religion and of God? Why may it not, asks Bernard E. Meland, make man even more sensitive to the life of the spirit and more aware of his dependence upon resources other than his own? Why may God not become more relevant and realistic as man becomes psychologically more mature?

Other brilliant scientists gladly affirm their belief in God. Last year, for instance, forty scientists representing every scientific discipline joined in publishing a book entitled *The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe*. A few sentences from the essay by Dr. Andrew Conway Ivy of the University of Illinois Medical School and a scientist of world renown will summarize the point of view of most of these men. "Belief in the existence of God," he says, "provides the only complete, ultimate and rational meaning to existence. [It] is the

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C. Willard Fetter *last year became the pastor of First Evangelical United Brethren Church, Dayton, Ohio, after serving for fourteen years as minister of First Evangelical United Brethren Church in Akron. He received his education at Wheaton College, Lebanon Valley College and United Theological Seminary in Dayton. In 1959 he was chairman of the Ohio Pastors' Convention in Columbus, a gathering of more than 2000 Protestant clergy. Dr. Fetter is an editorial associate of The Pulpit.*

only ultimate reason for the certainty that man is a person and something more than a parcel of matter. Belief in God is the only . . . source of our inalienable rights and duties."[1]

Dr. Ivy demonstrates the existence of God in much the same way Thomas Aquinas did many years ago: from the principle of causality. For that matter, Isaiah made the same assumption. "Lift up your eyes [to the stars] and see: who created these?" In the human body each cell almost without exception "knows" its role in carrying out the welfare of the body. The cause? Ivy says, "God." He too accepts the evidence for evolution. But his conclusions are different from Huxley's. He sees man's deep insight, rational thinking, great courage, faith and love, *not* as evidence that man can now dispense with his idea of God but as proofs *of* God. The most profound thoughts and actions of men demonstrate the prior existence of a superior Mind and Creator who is revealed to those who do not erect a barrier against him.

The fact that 300 million years ago amphibians made the "breakthrough" from water to land and that we are on the verge of a "breakthrough" to space and that man has broken through to psychological evolution (if indeed he has), argue for the existence of a cosmic creative Spirit, a purposeful Creator. These are not evidences that man in his fear has imagined a God to whom he can flee for refuge, but that an adventurous and creative purpose indwells man. A recent article stated that scientists think that the radiation sounds heard from the most distant points of the universe may be the sounds of the continuous expansion and creation of the universe, as new worlds are coming into being by cosmic evolution. If this is correct it would seem to be only further evidence for the existence of God — not a static God, but a living, working, still-creating God.

A Cosmic Creative Spirit

Our faith in God is more intimate and deep than we have yet probed. By *God* we mean here what Wieman meant, a cosmic, creative "power that is more than human, which saves man from ultimate disaster and transforms him into the best that he can ever become." But we mean more: He is a Person, interested in persons. The intimate name by which we have learned to call him is a personal name: Father. Apart from faith in a God who is personal no individual can really achieve a sense of dignity and worth as a person. If God is not interested in persons, then persons may be used as tools or stepping stones by ambitious people. We may use others and others may use us. But from first to last the Bible speaks of God in personal terms.

By *persons* we are thinking of conscious, intelligent beings who are aware of themselves and conscious of others. The persons we know live in physical bodies, but there is no good reason to suppose that personal beings could not exist without physical bodies. If there are intelligent persons on other planets they may or may not resemble us physically. The decisive thing about personality is not the physical but what we call the mental or the spiritual — the psyche. We see persons whose bodies are altered by disease or surgery until they are almost unrecognizable but we still recognize their personality.

So we do not mean to say that God is a physical personality, but that the moral, intellectual and spiritual aspects of personality as we know them belong to him not less but rather more than to us. If we see righteousness, justice, concern, mercy or love in men, may we not assume that these things have derived from God? Jesus, seeing human personality express itself in fatherly concern for children, reasoned that God must be a great father, supremely concerned for the welfare of his family. "If you, then, being evil, give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven?" he asked.

Reflection of God's Compassion

Someone objects to what I have said. "Preacher, you are doing exactly what Huxley accused: creating a God in man's image. By reasoning from the human to the divine fatherhood you are revealing the immaturity of man who needs a divinized father-image upon which to rest." I do not think so. We are not making God in our image but seeking the source of our highest values and finding them to be the reflection of his image.

Here is a researcher looking for a cure for leukemia. Why? Is his goal money or fame or even scientific curiosity? He is not just searching for a medical prescription but for a way of relieving helpless, suffering humanity. He is driven by a compassionate urge. But why? Why should anyone worry about other people's troubles and pains? This is the reflection of the compassion of God, the reflection of his personality in human persons. "But there is evil in man, too," you say. I reply, "How do you know? Why do you call what you see *evil;* by what comparison?" By comparison with good, obviously. And the source of *good?* The source of your knowledge of good? We are back to God whose image we reflect, even when we distort it in evil.

Moreover, the world has had some supremely good people in it and one especially. "Jesus is within our humankind," says Dr. Buttrick. "He is inextricably in the fabric of human history. How shall he be explained?" If evil in human life makes it hard to believe in God, does not Christ's goodness make it impossible for us not to believe in him? If we see a characteristic red color in the

[1] Edited by John Clover Monsma (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1958). Used by permission.

roadside rocks we say, "There is iron where they came from." If we see goodness cropping up in mankind, we say, "There is God where that came from."

Source of Brotherhood

Our faith in God is not only based on the principle of causality and the reflection of his image in humanity. Our faith is also pragmatic, that is, practical. When man's belief in God has been perverted his relationship with other men has also become perverted. Paul pointed this out in the early pages of his letter to the Romans. He began very much as we began in this sermon by pointing out that God's "eternal power and deity" have been clearly seen in the creation, in the universe, and that therefore all men should have known God through this natural law. This means, argues the apostle, that men are responsible to God and really know of their responsibility. There is no human existence apart from God. But when men leave the God whose majesty they see in nature, fail to submit to him and worship some other god — images (in the case of ancient pagans), or the state (as in the case of modern totalitarianisms), or material wealth (as in the case of many freedom-loving moderns) — they lose their highest human glory. "They become futile in their thinking and their senseless minds are darkened," says Paul. The result, as Paul writes in unblushing language, is that man's perverted relationship with God is followed by the perversion of all human relationships.

In the history of the 20th century we have seen world-wide evidence of this perversion of humanity when God is not taken seriously, or when he is denied outright. Such moral and spiritual values as justice, mercy, freedom and truth thrive among men only when men feel that over them there is a God who embodies these virtues and expects them of his people. Human dignity means nothing apart from a sense of human brotherhood; and human brotherhood cannot be derived from any source except a divine fatherhood. Men can remain truly free and equal only as creatures of God, for only before him are men truly equal. When God and the moral law are denied or dispensed with, or even slighted, there can be no real argument against the exploitation of man by man. If human rights are given by the state, then the state can take away those rights, and there can be no argument against the Nazi gas chambers or the mass liquidation under the Russian regime.

The pragmatic argument for belief in God is also seen in the way individuals react to adversity. When the materialistic basis of life is crushed, the person who worships that god rather than the Creator is often crushed and commits suicide. Suicide notes usually reveal that the individual has lost all sense of life's meaning and therefore all reason for living.

George Sterling, the poet, was regarded as one of California's greatest sons. He committed suicide and his friends knew why. Once he had enjoyed a vigorous faith, but he lost the ability to stand up to misfortune; finally, lonely, fearful and sick at heart, he brought his dreary existence to an end. On the other hand, consider an essay written many years ago by William James, "Is Life Worth Living?" This great scholar, who by his own admission was once close to suicide, discussed the problem of the loss of meaning and the suicidal view of life. He added, "Let me say immediately that my final appeal is to nothing more recondite than religious faith."

Problems come to the religious person as well as to the one whose faith in God is gone. Believers as well as atheists become physically and mentally ill, suffer financial reverses and lose their friends. But the difference is that one does not lose his reason for living. Having God he retains hope. Thus we believe in God the Father Almighty as the cause and source of the universe and the adventurous spirit of man, as the loving Father whose personal characteristics we see reflected in humanity at its best, and as the One who gives to our lives a sense of meaning and worth and who sustains us in adversity. Can we take such a God for granted? Must we not, rather, take him seriously?

Not Conserving but Serving

None of us would want to see belief in God vanish as the prevalent philosophy of our society. We want at least to conserve this belief. I recall a dinner table conversation at a large fund-raising function with a business executive. He informed me with pride that when he was at home the family always said grace before a meal. "It is necessary," he said, "in this modern day to conserve some social graces and religious amenities." He was a true conservative; he wanted nothing good to be lost, least of all, religious faith. But he was merely conserving; he was not taking God seriously in his life. He did not go to church, although he sent his family. He contributed generously, but only as a tax deduction, and by his own admission saw little relationship between God and his business life. He was like the man in Jesus' parable who wanted to conserve his master's wealth and who hid it in the ground.

God cannot be merely *con*served. He must be *served* if we are really to take him seriously. Helmut Thielicke, a German pastor who is speaking to one of the largest congregations of the world today, says that there are only two ways to take a thing seriously. "Either you renounce it or you risk everything for it." "Throw your Christianity on the trash heap," he says, "or else let God be *Lord* of your life. There is no third choice."[2]

[2] Helmut Thielicke, *The Waiting Father* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959). Used by permission.

Reading from the Pulpit

By Thomas H. Marsh

A MINISTER reads aloud nearly every time he stands in the pulpit. Either the ritual, the hymnbook or the Bible, and sometimes all three require his attention. This suggests that the minister who has difficulty projecting written material vocally is in for a bad time, and those who listen to him are sentenced to dull moments. There are ministers, of course, who read well and are an inspiration to their congregations. Very few ministers, however, are as effective in speaking the printed word as they are in the delivery of their sermons. Certain patterns of behavior have been repeated often enough to suggest a few conclusions about the causes of poor reading in the pulpit.

Ministers, like other people, have native abilities and capacities which differ widely. It is not possible therefore to make a general statement explaining why ministers read well or read poorly. A more accurate observation would be that a particular minister reads ineffectively because of certain factors. Let us examine some of these factors.

Some read poorly because they do not sense the drama in literature. I am certainly not advocating exhibitionism, but a person without a sense of the dramatic will always be somewhat colorless, or even worse, in his attempt to avoid being colorless, will be dramatic in the wrong places and in the worst sense of the word.

Some men stand in the pulpit without either training or experience in reading aloud. Sometimes this is the result of their having decided on the ministry as a profession late in their college careers. With a major in animal husbandry or forestry or other kindred fields, these students felt no need to enroll in classes which offered opportunities for speech improvement. If they have sufficient native ability, time and experience will come to their aid. In the meantime congregations must be patient.

Some ministers are poor readers because they bend over backward to avoid the role of the "show-off." Loud false-toned preaching and reading have conditioned them to the point where they will never speak from the pulpit except in an overly reserved manner. They bow their heads, keep their voices low and their personalities withdrawn.

Reading with Conviction

Any person who has lost the religious convictions he once held and has not replaced them with equally satisfactory ones, cannot read the Scripture with a tone of assurance. A great number of seminary students find themselves in this in-between stage. Beliefs they once held firmly cannot be held in the light of modern knowledge. Many an older minister, betrayed by circumstances and people, no longer reads the Scripture with his former sense of conviction. He repeats words, but the assurance is gone.

Some ministers are ineffective readers because they mistakenly believe the way to get people to believe that the Bible is holy is to read it in a special, unearthly, "holy" tone. As John Wesley has pointed out, the greatest fault of ministerial speaking is speaking with an awful, solemn tone. To avoid such tones Wesley advised that ministers should speak in public as they do in conversation. Deliver material from the pulpit in the same manner as if talking to a friend, with the necessary volume added. Sometimes a minister is unaware of how he sounds. He becomes highly indignant if his tones are imitated in an attempt to point out this fault. He knows he does not sound the way the critic says he does. A few recording sessions are usually necessary to get such a man to face facts. When he realizes that at least the recorder must be unprejudiced, there is hope for improvement. Some men are born with a keen sense of pitch and others do not have it. The minister who is almost tone-deaf has a handicap that is difficult to overcome. He may become an excellent pastor, but never a first-class preacher. The human voice can be the most moving of all musical instruments, but unless the minister can hear and pitch his own voice accurately, he cannot control it.

There are less complicated reasons for ineffective vocal communication of the printed page. A minister may use so little volume that he cannot be heard beyond the front pews. The opposite tendency to read everything in a very loud voice is just as unpleasant for listeners. When everything is spoken in a loud voice, all of it sounds alike and there is little chance to emphasize important ideas. Mispronunciation and careless enunciation of words are defects which draw attention to the reader instead of to what he reads. These are nothing more than laziness and bad habit which any serious minded minister can overcome if he has the desire to do so. It is disturbing to hear a minister change the injunction of our Lord from "clothe the naked" to "clothe the necked," or to hear him pray for "stringth" when he means "strength," or to speak in the general prayer of confession about the sins we most "gre-vi-us-ly" have committed.

The minister who gives himself energetically to his pulpit reading will show a desire to share his understanding and feelings about what he is reading. Warmth and concern are necessary elements of pulpit reading. When these characteristics are present many other deficiencies are overlooked by a congregation. In fact, the main hope of the untrained rests on this fact.

Reading words instead of ideas is one of the most common errors. Early in our education we learn to repeat

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Not many ministers can be, or want to be, a Charles Laughton in the reading of Scripture. But most ministers — they would admit it — should read from the pulpit much better than they do. Here are some helpful hints.

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words, but effective oral reading is the result of using groups of words to state an idea and suggest an attitude. Good reading includes the projection of ideas, not separate words. Much ineffective reading is due to absent-mindedness: the reader is not really thinking what he is repeating. In many instances the minister has read a passage from the pulpit so frequently and is familiar enough with the words that he can repeat them without thinking at all. Effective oral interpretation requires concentration on the ideas being read at the time they are being voiced.

Preliminary Study

Another common cause of ineffective pulpit reading is the lack of thorough study and analysis of the selection to be read. This results in hazy concepts in the place of sharp ones and of general instead of specific impressions. A congregation receives no more than the minister has discovered in a passage. To assume one is ready to read a selection because he has looked it over is a fallacy. Clear and sharp impressions of a passage require preliminary study. If one cannot study the material in its original language, commentaries need to be consulted to place the passage in true perspective as to setting and meaning. Major and minor themes should be determined, along with a knowledge of major divisions of the material where new subject matter is introduced or a different character is brought onto the scene. If a narrative is to be read, each character in the story should be considered as to his age and disposition. For example, in the familiar story of the Prodigal Son the servant questioned by the elder son makes only one speech, but how can this be given until it has been decided what kind of a person he is? He may speak with joy at the return of the Prodigal, or he may speak with great reserve for fear of offending the elder brother.

Breath capacity, clarity, emphasis and emotional impact all require that sentences be broken down into reading units. A sentence from the Prodigal Son will illustrate. "And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." If this sentence is grouped and read the way it is marked by commas, it is an incomplete sentence. Now add a vocal comma following the word "after," and the sentence is clear. The Revised Standard Version makes this correction. A further example from this story of the Prodigal Son: "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Grammatically all is correct here, but a subtle meaning creeps in and suggests a ridiculous situation: that the father has fallen on his own neck. All of the action, the seeing, the having of compassion, the running and the kissing, is on the part of the father. By vocally leaving out the comma after the word "neck," and not allowing any pause, the suggestion that the father fell on his own neck is in great part removed.

Major moods or emotions suggested in a passage need to be stressed. Sometimes the writer of a selection is so anxious that the proper mood be understood that he names it. In the story of the Prodigal Son, it was said of the elder son, "and he was angry." Other moods not as directly specified are just as important to the development of the story. Certainly the Prodigal Son experienced want, remorse, hope and repentance. The elder son felt surprise, anger and envy. The father showed compassion, joy, patience and love. It is just as important not to force an emotional attitude where none exists as it is to bring it out where it is suggested. The reading of a sentence as if every word that is being uttered is of great depth and significance, when the sentence is meant to be a simple assertion of an ordinary fact, borders on comedy instead of depth.

At times contrasting ideas may determine key words for emphasis. "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger." Here the contrast is in the thought that the servants have bread but the Prodigal perishes with hunger. In this example, as is true in many selections, it is important not to let the rhythm of the sentence determine the word for emphasis. Many times one may hear "How many *hired* servants of my father's. . . ." The word "hired" could be a key word only if two types of servants were being considered here: those who were hired and those who work without pay. Obviously this is not intended. If the word "hired" is to be given emphasis, it must be done by giving equal emphasis to "hired" and "servants," making it sound as one word.

Proper Emphases

Variety of emphases must also be remembered. If everything is emphasized, nothing stands out. The danger of emphasizing too many words needs attention especially when a series of closely related statements occurs: "and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it;" the usual reading of these phrases results in emphasizing "ring" and "hand," "shoes" and "feet," "calf" and "kill." If there were danger that someone might think the ring belonged in the nose, or the shoes on the hands, or that the calf was to be eaten alive, then this emphasis would be justified. If this is not the case, then it can be assumed the ring will be put on the hand and only the word "ring" requires emphasis. The same is true with shoes and calf. What is called for here is an over-all climactic movement: dress the Prodigal, get some food and throw a party with music and dancing! Emphasis of repeated details obscures the main movement.

Emphasis of the wrong word can give a false meaning to what is being read. The elder son says to his father: "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." If the emphasis is put on the word "me" in the phrase, "thou never gavest *me* a kid," as is frequently done, then the implication is that someone else had been given a kid but he did not get one. The idea here is that the father did not give him (even) a "kid," but gave the other son a "fatted calf." "Kid" is the key word that must be carried over to make a contrast with "calf." In questioning ministers as to why they emphasized "me" instead of "kid," they replied that they thought kid meant a young calf instead of goat, and others said they simply did not analyze the selection carefully enough to discover the contrast.

The key to reading any passage is understanding. The mind and the emotions are not separate. When the mind conceives an emotional situation, emotions rise and are to some degree discernable in the voice. Any minister who is willing to work at it can in time give an adequate interpretation to most biblical passages.

Pulpit Calendar

Aug. 6 — The Transfiguration.
Aug. 7 — 9th Sunday after Pentecost.
Aug. 14 — 10th Sunday after Pentecost.
Aug. 21 — 11th Sunday after Pentecost.
Aug. 28 — Festival of Christ the King.
Sept. 4 — Labor Sunday.
Sept. 5 — Labor Day.
Sept. 11 — 14th Sunday after Pentecost.
Sept. 18 — 15th Sunday after Pentecost.
Sept. 25 — 16th Sunday after Pentecost.
Sept. 25 – Oct. 2 — Christian Education Week.
Oct. 2. — World-Wide Communion.
Oct. 9 — 18th Sunday after Pentecost.
Oct. 16 — Laymen's Sunday.
Oct. 23 — World Order Sunday.
Oct. 30 — Reformation Sunday.
Oct. 31 — Reformation Day.

Ministering to Persons

By Roy A. Burkhart

As we look at the universe it is apparent that the Creator works on all his creations and creatures except man. God works in and through man and if he cannot work through man, God's work is temporarily blocked. With the gift of choice to man, which gift makes it possible for man to be himself, God accepts a limitation. If man refuses, God's plan may be frustrated for the moment. If we who profess to live by love co-operated fully with God, most of the problems of hunger, sickness, nakedness and loneliness in the world would be solved. If we refuse, freedom can be lost from the face of the earth. God's method is consent and compassion. All of his creation except man is set in the precision of instinct. Man is put on a different level. He is free, except for self-imposed or accepted tyranny. To man God gave a special gift, incompletion — and an insatiable desire for fulfillment. God says to man, "You can finish the story any way you like." He has provided his perfect revelation in Jesus and man cannot ask for a thing God is not doing every moment. God woos, as Dr. Buttrick says, but he never wounds. He is eternally polite. He withholds his revelations enough so as not to be coercive. Too much evidence would take from man the right to doubt and rob him of the adventure of faith.

If, therefore, it is our conviction that the individual can exercise the power of choice and is capable of building a life that is pure and lovely and good, then our real ministry should be primarily to persons rather than just running an institution. Often we think of "ministry to a group" but there is no such thing. True, one of the best ways to save a person is to save the group of which he is a part, but in the final analysis this is possible only by saving persons. The beginning is always with the individual. What happens between him and others determines what happens inside of him. What happens inside of him determines what happens through him.

Jesus' Strategy

The strategy of Jesus' leadership is clearly a ministry to persons. He did not announce a public meeting by the Sea of Galilee, inviting all those who wanted to share in building the Kingdom of God on earth. Instead, he prayed all night and then chose twelve men individually. He lived with them three years. In the crisis, one betrayed him, one denied him and all deserted him. Eleven of them later came to the fuller insight in the revelation of his resurrection and at Pentecost. There is little evidence that anybody was won as Jesus talked to groups. The day he taught five thousand, men besides women and children, the focus was on one lad with a few fish and biscuits. The story of the life of the Master can be told in his relationship not with groups but with persons. Few people knew he was born and few were aware of him after his resurrection. He lived with a few persons until something happened between them and through them. He based his whole plan on what would happen through those with whom he shared.

When we make a careful study of the leadership of Jesus, as I did when I became a pastor, we know that his is the real mastery, the revelation by which persons learn and achieve his mastery. In the course of my study I had an interview with Kagawa and I asked him to explain his strategy of leadership. His answer was simple: "Live with a group of committed persons until each of you and the group of you get your goal and your method clear." I believe this is the best way by which a church can become a beloved fellowship in which persons find the freedom and the opportunity to grow. When I went to First Community Church some twenty-four years ago, it was on the basis that the officials were committed to a ministry to persons in all areas of life. My first step was to talk personally to the leaders. Then I became acquainted with the school principals, the psychiatrists and physicians, the judges and social workers, editors and other key persons. I asked those who attended the morning service to fill out a questionnaire to ascertain what subjects they wanted me to preach about.

I waited nearly a year before forming a youth group. I visited the high schools and the campus, selecting twenty-one key young people. Twenty of the twenty-one responded and they became the heart of a growing, dynamic youth movement. I was not satisfied to deal with those who came; I went out to get those who did not attend. As we won them, they brought others. From year to year this principle was applied. Key men were won to the church and its work, and they enlisted in the various aspects of stewardship and leadership of the finance committee and the board of trustees and deacons. Rarely did I seek to sell a committee or a board; rather, I sold a key leader and he sold the group.

One Goal at a Time

It is important that a minister, after much prayer, come to see the goals ahead and then work on one at a time, living with persons until they see clearly so that they then sell other persons and groups. He works with persons. He seeks to help persons build a relationship in which they become close. They get beyond rubbing shoulders until, as Dr. Luccock once pointed out, they rub hearts. They share with each other. They come to know the fellowship of the search. They grow into a group experience that is not a substitute for thinking, where they are talked at, but where they share with each other.

In our church we have sought to apply this principle to the youngest child as well as the oldest person. We have special nurture groups for youth and adults on a fellowship level, and on a prayer-research level. In these groups persons find a relatedness in which they grow to know to Whom they belong. The groups have a therapeutic value and persons not only become persons consciously, but they

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One of the acknowledged experts in ministering to persons as individuals shares with us some of his techniques and his concerns.

know who they are and come to know the persons they can love.

The public worship is a ministry to persons. The sermon should not be a talking at a group but a talking with persons in such a way that each person feels he is having a conversation with the minister. In the total ministry there is an earnest attempt to help each person have three healthy births: into the body, into the life of the spirit in spacetime, and into the next dimension of the soul's life. If the first birth is healthy, the second birth is more likely to come naturally. The second birth is a divine act but it is possible only with a deep intent on the part of the person. It has a point of beginning, but we think it is never finished in time. It often has profound birth pains which sometimes are so great that the person may turn to a variety of substitutes. Moreover, many persons are born again but they do not continue to grow, and this could be the supreme tragedy in the soul's destiny. If the second birth does take place and growth follows, it means that the person is ready to be reborn into the spiritual or thought body, the experience we erroneously call "death."

Movement Toward Joy

As a result of such a ministry persons increasingly find a vital way of life and they are not in the church as a substitute for Christian living. There is increasing health among the people. They grow into the wholeness of the person in the wholeness of the body. The result is that religion works in personal lives, in marriage, in parenthood, in vocational life and in all areas of civic life. Persons of all ages respond freely to participation and to leadership in the church, and they do it not out of duty but because they love. The motive is not to escape hell but to fulfill the requirements for whole living. I have noticed across the years that an increasing number of persons begin to move toward joy, and joy is the essence of Christianity and of creation. They move toward gratitude and toward a deep sense of reverence for all of life. God to them is totally present and they live and move and have their being in him. They live by his leadership which is to appreciate the wisdom that runs the universe.

In a church that ministers to persons, the minister is ministered unto. He does not grow stale. The Holy Spirit works through him and he is illumined and renewed in the process. Then a prolonged ministry grows increasingly vital. In a church that is a relationship in which the emphasis is on ministry to persons rather than on running an institution, the Holy Spirit works through persons in a reciprocal ministry and all are enriched in the giving and in the receiving. The minister becomes a participant in this two-way process as all together seek to live to the glory of God.

Book Reviews

POINT OF GLAD RETURN. *By Lance Webb. Abingdon. $3.50.*

"CONFRONTING Christ in Your Life" is the subtitle for this book of personally practical sermonic essays. Salvation through Christ is often considered a blessing for the future or the past, but seldom a vital reality for the present. The underlying theme of this book is the way a personal relationship with God through Christ can bring meaning and joy into the baffling circumstances of life common to us all. The author has divided the thirteen chapters into three divisions: (1) "Christ and Your Frustrations," in which he discusses how the Christian can make emptiness, boredom, loneliness, self-pity, guilt and fear points of glad return, not of "no return"; (2) "Christ and Your Success," the positive phase of our existence for which we are responsible — ambition, laughter and health; and (3) "Christ and Your Human Frailty," the areas of life, as pain, illness, sorrow and dying, over which we have no control but through which, with Christian faith, we gain and do not lose. The effective use in this book of many illustrations drawn from the Bible, past and contemporary literature and personal observation is outstanding. Its good organization and detailed index make it a valuable reference book for ministers and counselors. Everyone who reads it will gain "fresh understanding of and guidance to a life that is eternally worth living." — *Evelyn Bauer, Bethany Christian High School, Goshen, Ind.*

THE PARABLES. *By Gerald Kennedy. Harper. $3.50.*

THE GREATEST SERMONS OF GEORGE H. MORRISON. *Introduced by George M. Docherty. Harper. $3.50.*

THE PASTORAL SERMONS OF RONALD A. KNOX. *Edited by Philip Caraman, S.J. Sheed & Ward. $8.50.*

ONE criticism sometimes made against books and magazines of sermons is that the authors remove all of their good illustrations before the sermons are submitted for publication. Bishop Kennedy's *Parables* certainly does not come under that judgment. It is studded with sparkling, pertinent, fresh analogies; warm, human stories; relevant quotations; epigrammatic sentences — all of which not only attract and hold the interest of the listener but also focus the parables of Jesus on the problems of our times. There is realism in these sermons; in this they are true to the parables themselves. On the one hand Bishop Kennedy does not evade the difficult and disturbing implications of the parables; but, on the other hand, he successfully resists the temptation to be merely exegetical or elaborately expository. Here he is clearly and simply the preacher, uncovering the eternal parables so that they may cast their beams of light on the needs of men and women in our day. Many a minister reading these sermons will say, "I wish I had said that." And he will; he will.

The prayers of Scottish mothers that their sons would grow up to be great preachers have been abundantly answered and through them the world has been blessed. George Herbert Morrison belongs to the noble line in the Scottish pattern of preaching. As George M. Docherty indicates in a brief but instructive biographical and critical introduction to this collection of Morrison's sermons, Morrison solved the pastor-preacher tension. He was first and foremost the pastor and the effectiveness of his preached word was due not only to the personal discipline which kept him long hours in his study but even more to the pastoral concern which took him to his people. These sermons are marked by simplicity and clarity; there are no artificial embellishments. Beauty and power are sustained by an artful and often painstaking selection of the proper word for the proper place. Frequently there are terse maxims, of the style of Robertson of Brighton, putting the whole thought in irreducible terms. Such lines as the following show the master touch: "That was what Jesus meant by unbelief: not a mind that denies, but a spirit that disowns. . . . There are two ways in which Christ has worked in His long task of the regeneration of mankind. He has brought among us from heaven what is new, and He has consecrated what was old." There are many more, and the discovery of such gems is only a fractional part of the reward which comes to those who read these sermons.

No minister can read Monsignor Knox's collected sermons without becoming a better preacher, indeed, a better Christian. To say of this collection of sermons that it is "the most impressive body of pastoral teaching of our time" is to issue a claim which several homileticians in our day could challenge. Certainly it is no exaggeration to say that within the Roman Catholic literary tradition this collection is comparable only with Newman's Oxford sermons. To compare these pastoral homilies with that form of discourse to which Protestants usually give the title *sermon* is to do an injustice to both. The differences are obvious. The sermons frequently rise, of course, from theological presuppositions which are alien to Protestant thought; and the sermons are, by our measurements, too brief. (On the average they would consume not more

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by Andrew Hobart
President,
Ministers Life and Casualty Union

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than ten minutes each.) Even so, there is spiritual profundity in these pastoral teachings; and the deep things of the spirit are expounded in an idiom which is clean and precise in definition yet beautifully fluid in description. Competency, purity and elegance of language are merged in a style which is worthy of close study and prudent emulation. The sensitive Protestant spirit can easily be offended by some of these sermons; the extended attention given to the Eucharist will not please it; the logic of some passages will be unacceptable, even irritating. It will be tragic, however, if the Protestant reader permits these annoyances to deprive him of that abundant expository and homiletical table which this master preacher has prepared. Msgr. Knox's translation of the Bible into contemporary English won him his deserved place in the great tradition of English spiritual writers. The publication of all his extant sermons in this volume and in its companion, *Occasional Sermons,* will confirm the esteem in which he is held not only by the Catholic community but by all people who have been served by his writings. — *K.H.*

A Protestant Speaks His Mind. *By Ilion T. Jones. Westminster. $3.95.*

JONES sees grave danger in the current exaltation of tolerance and harmony above honesty and truth, especially in our relations with Roman Catholicism. He provides a responsibile summary description of New Testament Christianity, of "the ancient undivided church," and of Protestant teaching in its contrast with Roman Catholic teaching. In this connection he shows how already in the early church extensive distortions of the primitive gospel had been introduced. The willingness of some Protestants to seek common ground with Rome in the third- and fourth-century church is a betrayal of the Reformation and of the gospel itself. Furthermore, Rome is correct in its claim that the limitation of spiritual guidance to the early church is arbitrary.

The Roman church accepts our religious freedom and even our general democratic liberties in America only so long as she is not strong enough to implement her own quite antithetical program. Many American Catholics are personally dedicated to equal freedom for all, but Jones shows their helplessness before a Vatican which shows no disposition to change its principles and which insists that obedience to its authority supersedes any political oath or moral obligation. We must discuss frankly the problems posed by growing Catholic power, by increasingly successful attacks on the principle of separation of church and state, and by large numbers of Catholics attaining positions of political power.

The book is interestingly written and factually accurate. Its emphasis on the threat of Catholicism gives a one-sided character to its selection and interpretation of the data and will cause those who disagree with the thesis to feel that they are unfairly treated. One senses also that the seriousness of the inner division of Protestantism and of its widespread secularization is not fully appreciated. But perhaps this kind of book will help us to recover our unity and Christian integrity. — *John B. Cobb, Jr., Southern California School of Theology, Claremont, Calif.*

Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis. *By Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki and Richard De Martino. Harper. $4.00.*

THIS intriguing volume is the result of a conference at the Autonomous University of Mexico, Cuernavaca, Mexico, held in the summer of 1957. This workshop on Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis brought together fifty psychologists and psychiatrists from Mexico and the United States. Such a venture may strike one, at first thought, as a dialogue between strange bedfellows; yet the meeting is evidence of certain developments within psychoanalysis, as well as of a wider interest in Zen Buddhism in the western world. Any book on this subject will probably excite more attention today than it would have a dozen years ago.

The volume contains five lectures by Dr. Suzuki. An acquaintance with Zen from his other writings is almost a prerequisite for understanding these. He is dealing with specific concepts of the self and of the unconscious as they are understood within Zen Buddhism. He achieves amazing clarity of exposition of ideas still largely foreign to our heritage. Particularly does he contrast the intellection, so characteristic in the West, with the intuitive approach of the East. But he summarizes the Zen discipline and teaching in a way he regards significant for West and East alike:

> To do goods,
> To avoid evils,
> To purify one's own heart;
> This is the Buddha-Way.

Erich Fromm speaks of Zen as "a blending of Indian rationality and abstraction with Chinese concreteness and realism." Standing in contrast to this way of salvation is psychoanalysis, nonreligious, scientific, a "child of Western humanism and rationalism, and of the 19th-century romantic search for the dark forces which elude rationalism." Yet he finds that there is a strange compatibility between the two in that both are concerned with insights into man's true nature, with probing the unconscious, with the achievement of liberation. Both seem to aim at making the unconscious conscious, though their methods vary. Dr. Fromm feels that Zen and psychoanalysis can be reciprocally helpful to each other.

There is nothing here for the beatnik. But for serious students of religion many helpful insights are afforded

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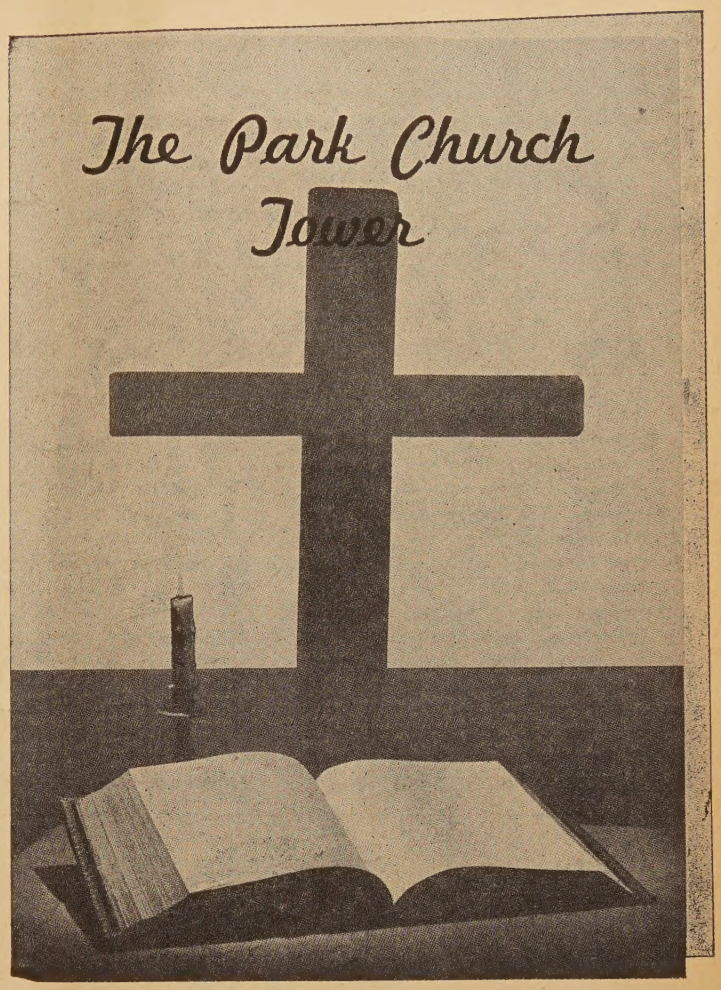

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by this volume. In a shrinking and insecure world we need to have as much mutual understanding as possible. Dr. De Martino, who is a student of Zen and a teacher in the University of Kyoto, wrote the final chapter, an essay on "The Human Situation and Zen Buddhism." The book would be more easily understood if it had been made the introductory chapter. — *James K. Mathews, Division of World Missions of the Board of Missions of The Methodist Church, New York, N.Y.*

SERMON OUTLINES FROM SERMON MASTERS. *By Ian MacPherson. Abingdon. $2.50.*

WHETHER this little book of sermon outlines from the masters is a terrible haven or a smiling ambush depends entirely upon the reader. It can be either. Here are 550 sermon plans from the New Testament — enough for 13 and ¾ years of preaching at 40 sermons per year. In the main they are well done and usable, conforming to the author's eight characteristics of a good sermon: scriptural, vital, integral, original, logical, symmetrical, pictorial, practical. This book will therefore tempt the minister as few books do. His danger is that he will let these outlines take him captive, killing in him the urge to "work out his own salvation." If, however, he remembers point four, if he remembers that a good sermon must be original, the outlines drawn from the masters will spur his own inventiveness. In any event the minister who uses these skeletons will have to put flesh upon them. In this too originality is required if the sermons are not to be artificial.

One word of caution. Prospective users of this book should not be misled by the word *masters.* Wesley, Beecher, Robertson, Morgan and Moody are each represented by one sermon outline; Fosdick, Sockman, Buttrick, Weatherhead, Calvin, Knox, Luther and master preachers of the earlier church are represented by none. This is the glaring deficiency of a book which otherwise achieves its purpose. — *K.H.*

THE STORY OF ISRAEL. *By Stephen Szikszai. Westminster. $1.50.*

THE THRESHOLD OF CHRISTIANITY. *By Lawrence E. Toombs. Westminster. $1.50.*

THESE two little books of less than one hundred pages each, designed for the lay reader, especially the teachers of Bible in the church school, are interesting and delightful accounts of the historical periods from Joshua to Alexander the Great and from the dissolution of Alexander's empire to the coming of Jesus. Both are admirably well done and easy to read. The second one, due to the discovery and use of the Dead Sea Scrolls, gives new information which the ordinary lay reader is not apt to have from older sources and doubtless will prove of greater use to him than the former. Neither book purports to be a scholarly treatise and consequently will not attract the attention of advanced students. Yet both ought to have a wide audience among laymen. The Westminster Press is to be congratulated for the practical service it is rendering to the general reading public through its Guides to the Bible series. — *William R. Cannon, dean, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Ga.*

HOW JESUS BECAME GOD. *By Conrad H. Moehlman. Philosophical Library. $4.75.*

TOUGH, critical studies such as Dr. Moehlman makes in this historical study of the life of Jesus and the traditions which molded the memory of that life are not in vogue in our time. Devoid of theological implications — which means that it is still theologically based — this scientific study of the deifying of Jesus serves as a caution and a reminder to proponents of a high Christology.

GOSPEL AND MYTH IN THE THOUGHT OF RUDOLPH BULTMANN. *By Giovanni Miegge. John Knox. $4.00.*

A BOOK written by Giovanni Miegge about the writings of Rudolf Bultmann and translated by Stephen Neill cannot be ignored by anyone interested in the provocative thought which has occupied a large part of theological discussion in the past twenty years. Bultmann's contribution to New Testament studies and the impact of that contribution on theological debate are now widely acknowledged. Miegge, professor of the history of Christianity at the Waldensian Theological Seminary in Rome, first gained fame by his brilliant study of mariology. Stephen Neill, British ecclesiastic, has gathered through his numerous books a large and deserved following in this country. The subject, the author and the translator are in themselves sufficient advertisement of the value of this work. Moreover, the study does not disappoint the great expectations stirred by the personalities associated with it. It will undoubtedly prove to be of immense significance both as an introduction to and as a summary of Bultmann's thought on the relationship of mythical forms to the essential proclamations of the gospel. The parish minister has the interest but he does not have the time to make a thorough exploration of all current theological trends. *Gospel and Myth* will give him at least an awareness of the manner in which Bultmann reinterprets New Testament writings. Miegge is expert in gathering the essence of Bultmann's approach without sacrificing its profundity and the translation preserves and communicates Miegge's understanding of the work and witness of Rudolf Bultmann. — *K.H.*

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THE TRADING POST

[In this column from month to month readers will find an assortment of sermon ideas, outlines, texts, thought primers, illustrations, quotations — new and slightly used. You are invited to make free use of these items provided that for each one used you submit one of your own of equal quality and originality. Send all items for exchange to The Trading Post, The Pulpit, 407 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago 5, Illinois. No entries will be returned. Items accepted will be published with the name of the sender. — Ed.]

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." How can you make that text turn down the street your people live on and knock on their door? Try this: When the Word became flesh, the flesh was blessed. Henceforth let no man call common what God has honored. When the Word became flesh, the Word was revealed. Henceforth we see "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." When the Word became flesh, the godly life was made available to man. Henceforth, "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ."

•

Ernest Renan wrote: "Whatever may be the surprises of the future Jesus will never be surpassed."

•

Quotations Waiting for Sermons:

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table said that when two people are talking together — Henry and Thomas for example — there are six distinct persons in conversation: "There is the real Henry, known only to his Maker; Henry's ideal Henry, never the real one, and often very unlike him; Thomas' ideal Henry, never the real Henry nor Henry's Henry, but often very unlike either. In precisely the same way there are three Thomases."

"And who can say: — I have been always free, lived ever in the light of my own soul? I cannot —
But I have not grown easy in these bonds,
But I have not denied what bonds these were!
Yea, I take myself to witness,
That I have loved no darkness,
Sophisticated no truth,
Nursed no delusion,
Allowed no fear."
— Hugh Miller

"Our liberties are safe until the memories and experiences of the past are blotted out and the Mayflower with its band of pilgrims forgotten; until our public school system has fallen into decay and the nation into ignorance; until legislators have resigned their functions to ecclesiastical powers and their prerogatives to priests." — Woodrow Wilson

•

Thomas' sin: the demand for certainty.
Peter's sin: the demand for facility.
Judas' sin: the demand for immediacy.

•

Jesus Refused:
to divide disputed property,
to return to his mother,
to become a king,
to settle a tax problem,
to accept an unqualified disciple,
to grant special requests to James and John,
to call down fire from heaven,
to heed the advice of the devil,
to answer cunning questions,
to come down from the cross.

PULPIT POST

(Continued from page 2)

his sermon of "the witch hunting days of our Puritan fathers" and specifically of "the church elders [who] were preparing to burn a witch."

Never was there a witch burned in New England. There were so-called witches hanged in tragic and terrible numbers, but there were none burned. The distinction between hanging and burning may seem trivial, especially to the victims. Yet there is a substantial difference in horror, and it is important that our history books, and sermons, should tell truth and not fiction.

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES,
Minister Emeritus
The Community Church of New York, New York City

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